GANGSTA RAP SUMMIT

THE SOURCE

THE MAGAZINE OF HIP-HOP MUSIC, CULTURE & POLITICS

SCARFACE
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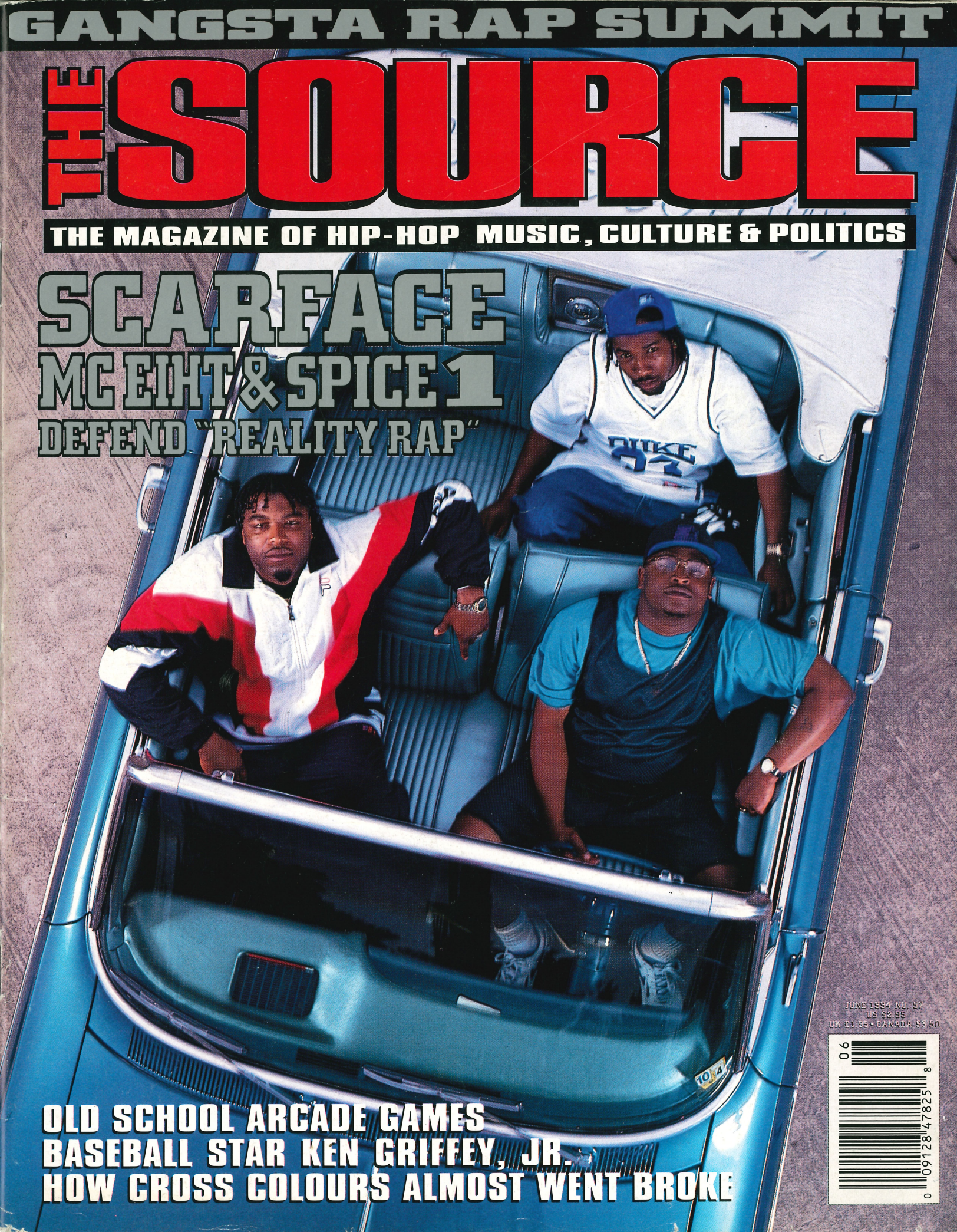
DEFEND "REALITY RAP"



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JUNE 1994 NO. 57
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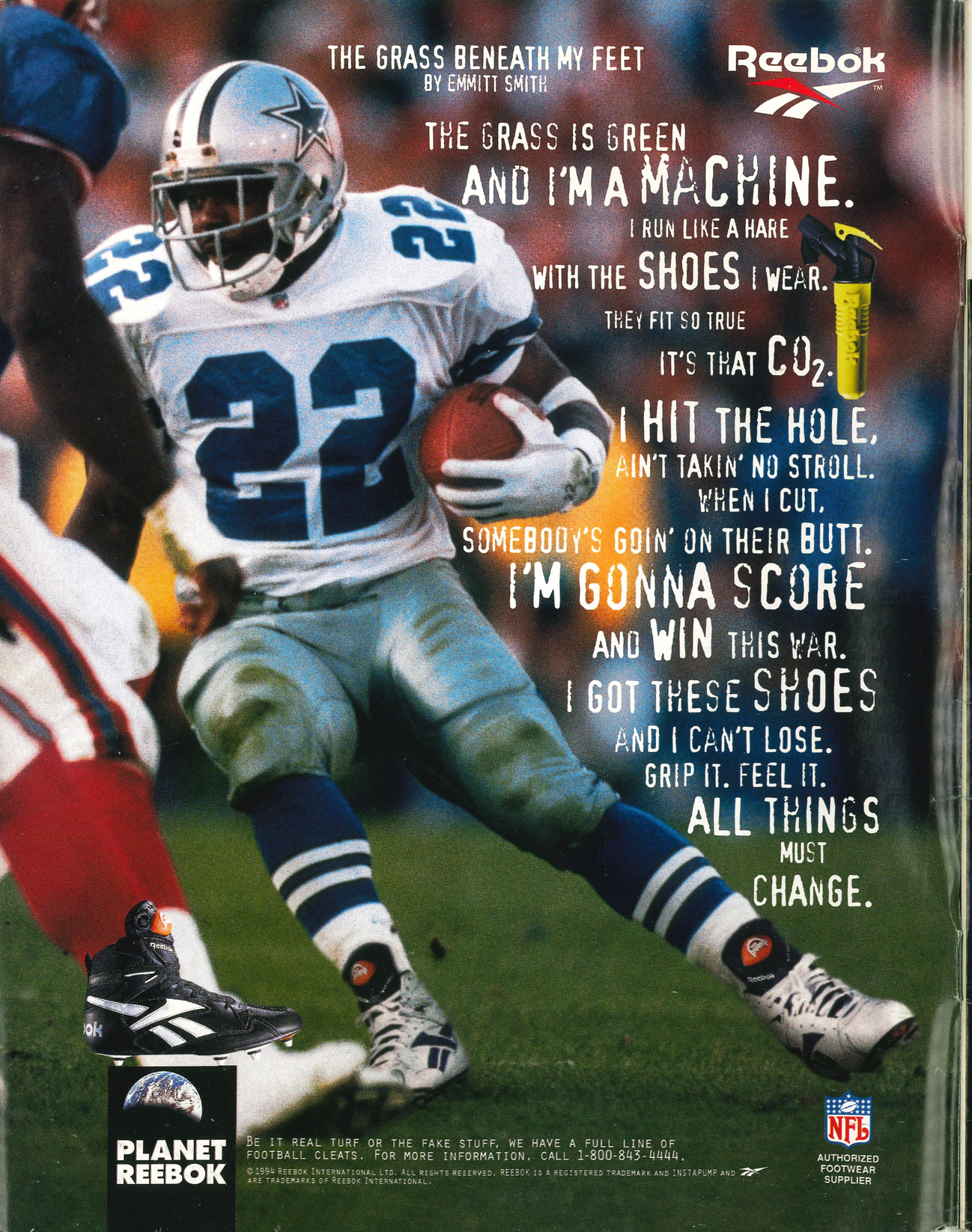

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JUNE

FEATURES

30 CROSS COLOURS
"DO YOU EVER THINK ABOUT WHEN YOU'RE OUTTA HERE?"

A couple of years ago, so many people were sporting Cross Colours gear that it may as well have been standard issue. How could a company this large almost go bankrupt? Jesse Chapado Washington looks for some answers.

46 KEN GRIFFEY, JR.
"THE SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN"

This Seatown baller might be the best in the big leagues right now. Maybe that's why the Mariners pay him six million bones a year to wear his glove and swing his specially-weighted bat. Senior Contributor Chris Wilder spent the day with this diehard hip-hop fan as he headed into the '94 season.

51 K.M.D.
"LIFE AFTER DEATH"

Coming off an acclaimed but commercially disappointing debut, KMD went back into the lab and came out with a better second joint. Ronin Ro checked in with Zev to see how he's handling the loss of his brother and rhyme partner. [Check out Jon Shecter's "Editorial" on page 10 for related KMD news.]

54 OLD SCHOOL ARCADE GAMES
"VIDEO DAZE"

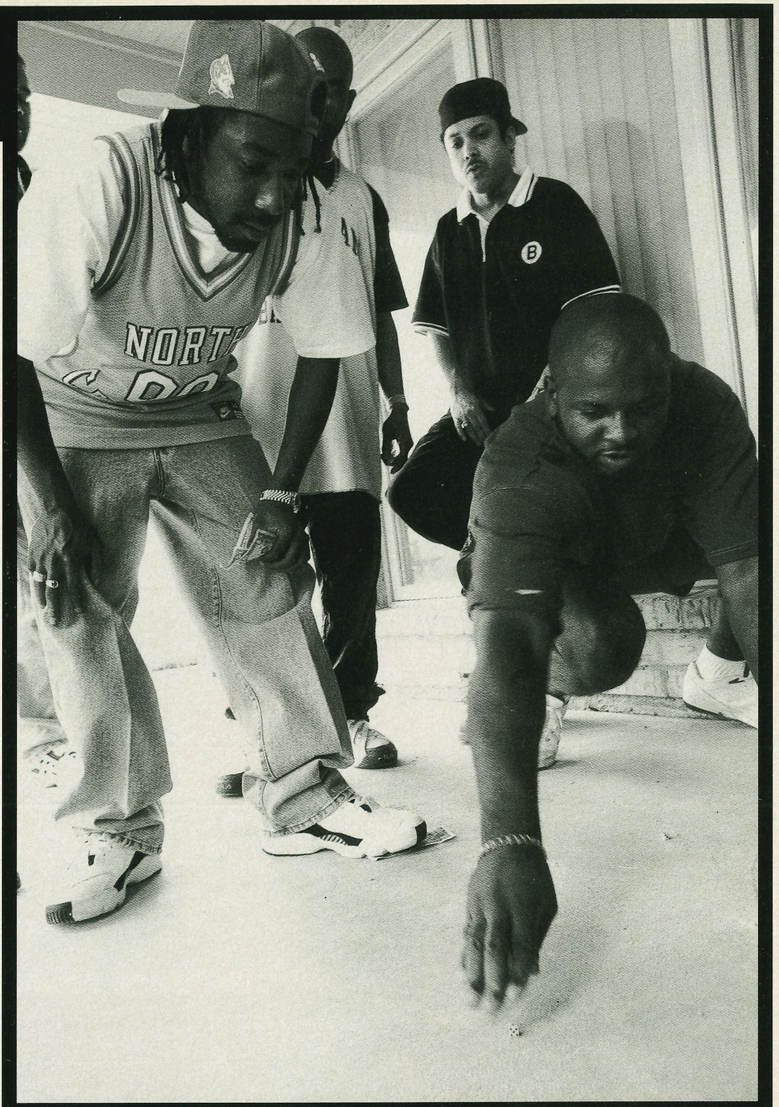
Remember Donkey Kong? How about Defender? Space Invaders? Pac Man? Those were the good ol' days—when each month brought a new video game, when a quarter bought you a fresh challenge on the cutting edge of technology. Jon Shecter and Chris Wilder remember the Old School classics.

58 THE ANTI-GANGSTA RAP CRUSADE
"CAUGHT UP IN THE (GANGSTA) RAPTURE"

What's up with all these people who are attacking our music? Senior Editor Kierna Mayo Dawsey goes head-to-head with C. Delores Tucker of the National Political Congress of Black Women to see if there is any logic to the anti-gangsta rap movement.

64 GANGSTA RAP SUMMIT
"REALITY CHECK"

The anti-gangsta rap activists can get off of their soapbox after the TV cameras stop coming around to humor them, but the hip-hop community will still be here. It's time that we have a discussion about our music within the hip-hop community without interference from outsiders. THE SOURCE gathered a crew of "reality rappers" (everyone agreed to do away with the term "gangsta rap") in Houston for this special summit.



COVER & CONTENTS PAGE PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHI MODU/ C²
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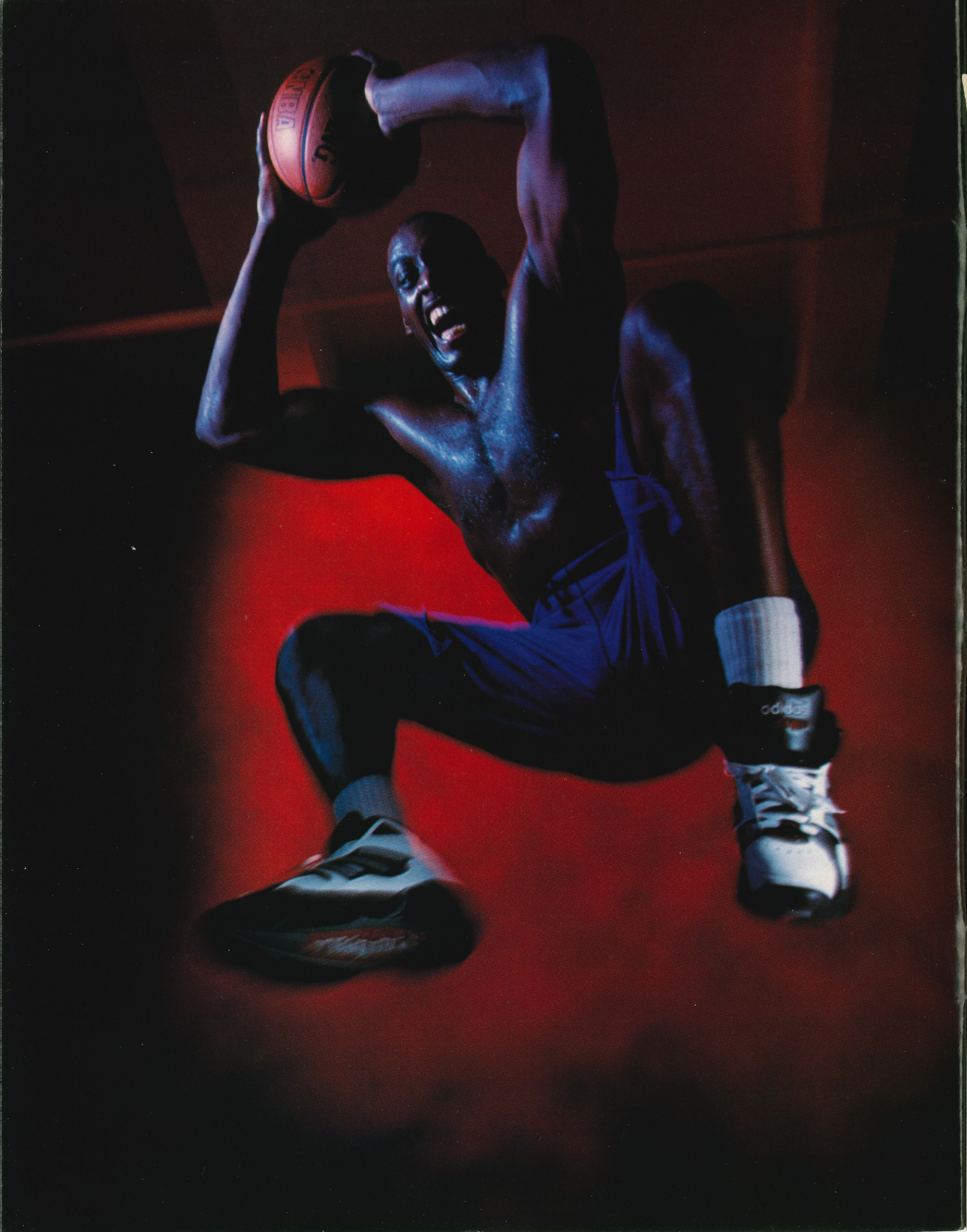

"Up In Your Face Basketball"

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PUBLISHER'S CREDO

We at THE SOURCE take very seriously the challenge of being the only independent voice for the Hip-Hop Nation. We strive hard to bring the reader a complete and unbiased representation of this incredible art form and all that surrounds it. With this in mind, we feel that it is important for our readers to be aware of the nature of our relationships with the rap industry.

We engage in business transactions with companies that are part of the rap music industry on two basic levels. Obviously, we accept advertising from such companies. Secondly, we at times are contracted by record companies to aid in the promotion of their product outside the direct channels of the magazine.

With respect to any of our business relationships, we feel it is our responsibility always to strictly police the integrity of our editorial content. Only in this way can we continue to bring to you the clear and unbiased coverage which we hope has won the respect of all of our readers.

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EDITORIAL

CORPORATE HYSTERIA

On the morning of Friday, April 8, Zev Love X of the rap group KMD was in good spirits. His new album, *Black Bastards*, was about to be released on Elektra, and as he headed to a scheduled meeting at his label's offices, he was confident it would do well. But by early afternoon, a great deal had changed. Bob Krasnow, chairman of Elektra Entertainment, informed Zev that morning that his record was being dropped from the label. The reason? The cover art, which depicted a Sambo character being hung in a noose, had generated enough "public outcry" that its release was permanently halted.

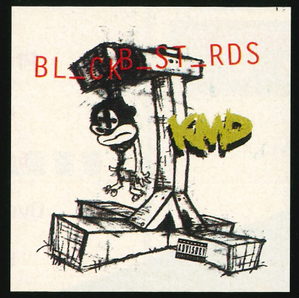
Zev had designed the image himself—just as he had designed the original Sambo image for his debut release three years ago. The thinking all along had been to "execute the stereotype" established by whites who dressed in blackface and lampooned Africans. "By me putting it out there, I'm really trying to provoke thought," Zev explained. "It's not the hanging of a person, it's an idea being executed—the whole concept and stereotype of our people being displayed as minstrels or servants or fools."

Terri Rossi, columnist and R&B chart manager at *Billboard*, had caught an early glance at the *Black Bastards* cover art, and she was somehow inspired to condemn the entire project in her "R&B Rhythms" column in *Monitor*. "I know the officers at Elektra and Time Warner are just kidding us," Rossi wrote. "To promote lynching is just plain evil. A holocaust is the same whether it is millions at a time or one at a time that ends up affecting millions. . . Maybe [the brother] needs a refresher course on the entire civil rights movement. . . Martin Luther King is spinning in his grave."

"If it was anybody being hung there, it was Al Jolson or Ted Danson, doing that stupid shit he did," countered Zev.

Clearly, the attack on the cover art seems flawed in the first place. But why couldn't Zev just alter the content slightly and move forward? It was just a sketch, it could be adjusted, right? Wrong. Though he offered to change the artwork, Zev and several disgruntled Elektra employees were informed that "the decision has already been made." Apparently, the album art was not the only issue in question. It was the mere *idea* of controversy that scared Elektra—and its corporate parent Time Warner—away from the project.

As we all know, Time Warner was subject to widespread criticism when the Ice T-Body Count song "Cop Killer" was challenged by a few prominent police associations. The bad press and the threats of a boycott scared TW executives and shareholders into eventually contradicting their initial First Amendment/free speech defense. Significantly, the KMD decision came a week before the annual Time Warner board of trustees meeting. The implication is clear: TW has issued a decree that all its subsidiaries—including the Warner-Elektra-Atlantic record family—must follow: stay away from controversy.



TOO CONTROVERSIAL? HARDLY.

"The decision has been made that it was best that the record be taken in its intended form elsewhere," read Elektra's official statement. "We do not wish to tamper with KMD's statement by asking them to change it." This from the same company (WEA) that distributes Snoop, Dr. Dre and Tupac—but you don't see them censoring sure moneymakers like them.

"I think Elektra's decision to not put out this record out is saying basically, 'We are scared to put it out,'" said an agitated Dante Ross, A&R executive for the project. It sure sounds like fear to us. The KMD album is now a victim of corporate hysteria.

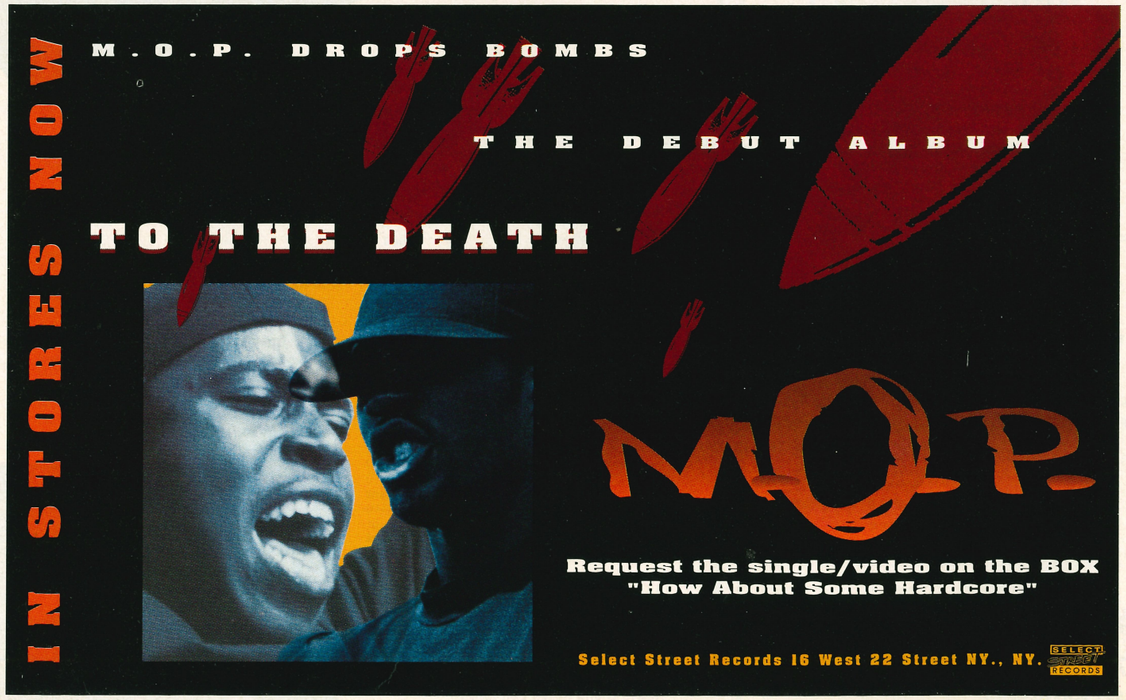
We had prepared a feature on KMD and a record review to run in this issue before we learned of the controversy. The album is fat as hell, with deep bass and deep lyrics, a step ahead of their first effort. We decided to pull the review (pending a new deal) but run Ronin Ro's story as is; the piece artfully captures the sense of impending doom that the corporate environment creates. The fact that this is a quality record that deserves to be heard makes this story even more relevant.

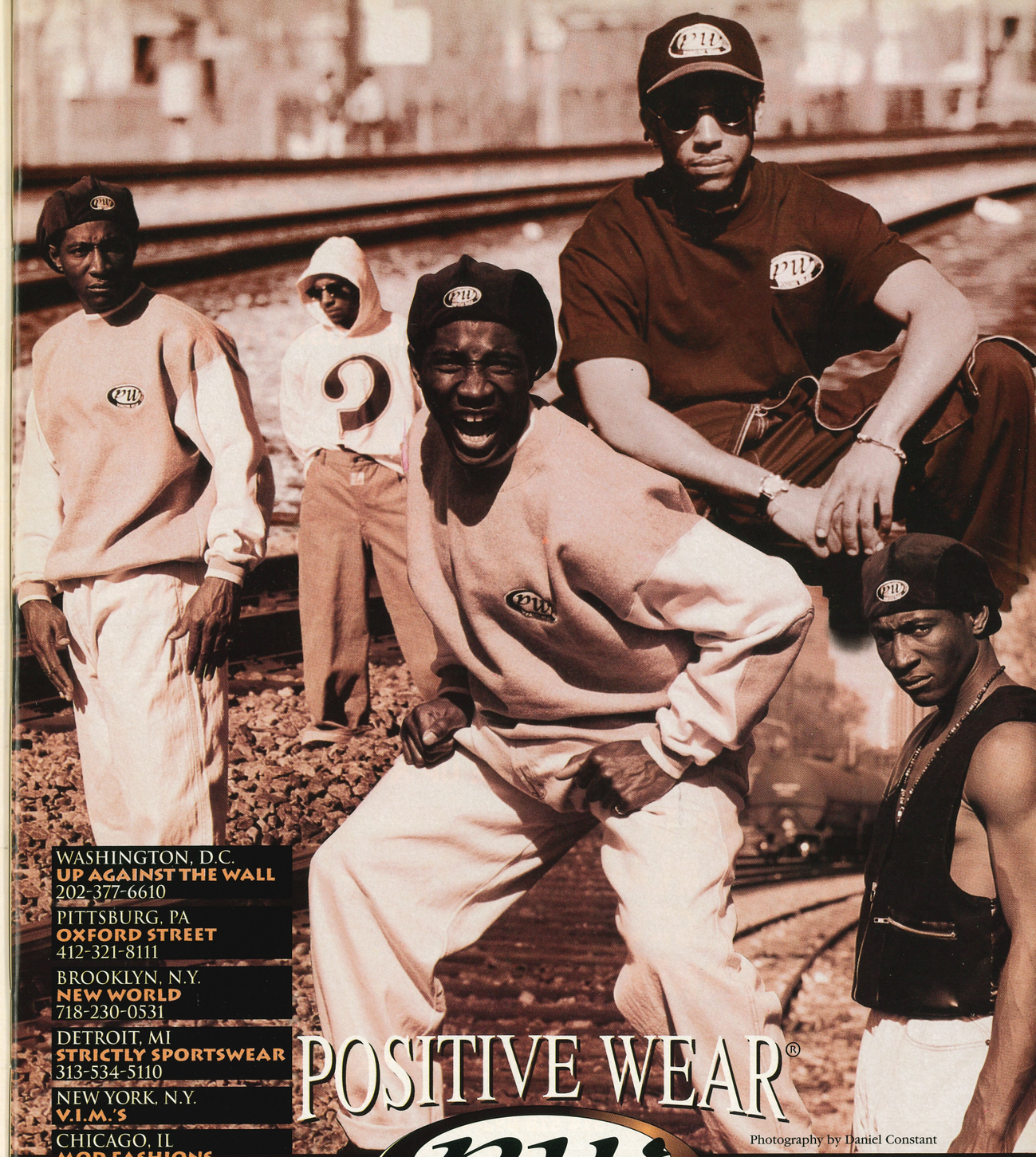
Rap music and corporate America share a peculiar relationship. Rappers like Snoop or Onyx achieve mindblowing, massive acclaim, sending their pure, uncut material through the vast channels of multi national corporations. But as we've seen over the years, it doesn't take much for the bottom-line bigwigs of big business to flip on hip-hop. It seems inevitable that the raw honesty of many rap records would offend enough of mainstream America to put the product at odds with the company selling it.

"So one person, her personal opinion speaks for the whole race and for my future as an artist and all that? That's nuts!" Zev was only a little vexed when he stopped by THE SOURCE the evening he had been dropped, since he seemed confident about getting a new deal. And Terri Rossi, contacted several days after Elektra's defensive maneuver, expressed regret that her actions led to this.

Yet the message this incident sends is clear. There is no more tolerance for "controversy" in the boardrooms of a media giant; rap is, quite simply, expendable. But what did you expect from corporate America?

JON SHECTER





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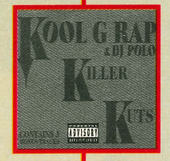

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Death Row/Interscope

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Columbia

ABOVE THE RIM
Soundtrack
Death Row/Interscope

GANGSTARR
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Chrysalis

MOP
To The Death
Select

DFC
Things In Tha Hood
Assault/Atlantic

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WU-TANG CLAN
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Payday

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GangStarr
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Fifth Ward Boyz
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Death Row/Interscope

GANG STORIES
South Central Cartel
DJ West/GWK/RAL/Chaos

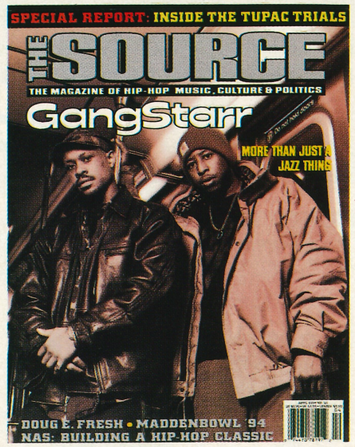
PLAY MY FUNK
Simple E
Fox

LETTERS

HAMMER BUMPS

Despite all the criticism I received from all my friends, I was ready to buy Hammer's new album. I liked the first two singles and videos so I was going to go for it. Then I read the April issue and was shocked ["It's All Wack," by James Bernard, Apr. '94]. Despite all Hammer's problems with the rap community, he was always perceived as being a smart and honest young man. I did not think Hammer would get down like this. I would like to thank THE SOURCE for not buying into this kind of business. Magazine covers and ratings should be judged by talent and ability. A word to Hammer: take some of that money and buy some self respect.

Pamela Mims
New York, NY



I was trippin' on the articles concerning the behavior of Hammer, Eric B and a few others. I, myself, have been waitin' for it to happen. The phenomenon of "street credibility" and being a true nigga has finally seeped into the conference rooms of the industry. Hammer wants credibility so he wants a cover. He needs you more than you need him.

Scape One
San Jose, CA

I am outraged. Is this the same kid that was all about cleanin' up the streets, non-violence and prayer? Now he's a ruff-neck sportin' skullies, black gloves and leopard bikini briefs? This kid went from one extreme to another. It's like watchin' the second verse of Ice Cube's "Be True To The Game" in reverse.

Raida
Atlanta, GA

I'm hella pissed. Hammer needs a check-up from the neck up. He has always been pop. He's got his own pop fans. Now he is all of a sudden hardcore and talkin' about pumps. I'm glad yah' didn't put him on the cover.

Robert "BTK" Drayton
Baltimore, MD

ILLMATIC FANATIC

I loved the article on Nas ["Nas, The Second Coming," by Jon Shecter, Apr. '94], that shit got me wide open. Nas represents true flavor—hip-hop like it should be—flowin' and goin' on every cut he does for self or when he peppers other rhymes ("Live At The BBQ" and "Back to the Grill Again") with his own unique flava. "It Ain't Hard To Tell" this MC is gonna make noise and his klassic kuts are in the makin'. Keep it real, Nas!

DJ Ladie Boo, STF Krew
Brooklyn, NY

I've been flippin' THE SOURCE pages for mad years, and I've always found your articles and interviews to be on point and enlightening, but damn. . . "greatest MC since Rakim?" Come on now, really! I was fortunate enough to catch an early sneak of the Nas project and I admit it's quite entertaining and shows that the kid has skills and potential, but to label him "golden child" is not only unfair to such classics as Redman, Method Man, Kool G Rap and others, but a complete cop-out to the whole East Coast.

Cassius Claymoe (Funk Dynasty)
Austin, TX

After reading the article about Nas, I was disgusted. Before Nas even came out, Lord Finesse was reigning terror on the mic. That is where Nas got his style from with the pronouns, compounds and adverbs. Just pop in a tape and listen to Lord Finesse. Give it up Gotdamit!

Wink B.Y.S.
Richmond, VA

On the real I feel that THE SOURCE has set a high standard in hip-hop. I would say you guys are on point eight times out of ten. But Nas with five mics? THE SOURCE was on point when giving out tha' fives all tha' way up to tha' *Chronic*. You give Nas five mics and Dr. Dre four-and-a-half, this has to be some 'ole East Coast favoritism shit in effect! You all need to re-evaluate that four-and-a-half you gave Dre, I don't care if tha' album is old! If Nas gets a five, then Dre should definitely get a fuckin' seven! Tha' *Chronic* was and is one of the most intoxicating albums ever made in music history. Don't front, I've seen y'all correct errors on tha' mics before. Correct this one, please!

Nimrod of Babylon West
Compton, CA

TELLIN' IT LIKE IT IS

X amount of respect to THE SOURCE! The story you guys had on Haiti gets my and plenty of other Haitians' thumbs up. ["Haiti: What Happened? What's Happening?" by Robert Fleming, Apr. '94] THE SOURCE is not like those other rap magazines that are all about posters, pin-ups and watered-down stories on rappers. Y'all get to the point with no punches pulled. You would never expect to see a political situation in a rap magazine. Hip-hop has mad Haitian followers in Boston, Connecticut, Miami, Canada and especially in New York. Thank ya' for all of my people who appreciate the story. Keep up the good work.

Island Son
Brooklyn, NY

YOU BETTA' RECOGNIZE

One thing that really bugs me is the opinion of many readers and some of the writing staff who think that white or non-Blacks shouldn't listen to rap or dress in hip-hop "styles." I find this pretty ironic since a lot of hip-hop is derived from other sub-cultures. The most obvious is the Mexican-American culture. Ice Cube, Ice T, Snoop and Kriss Kross drive lowriders and all dress in the "gangsta" look: baggy clothes, Ben Davies and bandannas. All of this is nothin' new, Mexican-American youth have been dressing this way and drivin' lowriders since the 1940s. So it really bugs me when Blacks act like they invented all this. I'm not saying only Mexicans can dress in "gangsta" clothing or drive lowriders, but Blacks should acknowledge and respect the culture this came from.

Laura Martinez
Riverside, CA

RESPECT AIN'T "HARD TO EARN"

It's great to see that GangStarr is getting the props they so much deserve ["The Definitive GangStarr Story," by Ronin Ro, Apr. '94]. Guru and Premier are one of the few artists that still make great music and stay true to hip-hop. For GangStarr, respect is "hard to earn." All I can say is "you've earned it!"

Craig Smith
Rockville, MD

Thank you for the feature on my favorite rapper, Guru, and his partner, DJ Premier. Not only are they extremely talented, but they display a respect for their profession that is unmatched. They show critics of rap music that success in the business is more about hard work than hyped-up image.

Desa Philadelphia
Brooklyn, NY

IT'S ABOUT TIME

I must give you props on the article on the Old School females of rap ["The Herstory of Hip-Hop," by Rob Marriott, Apr. '94]. I think it's fucked up that they don't get props. I feel that the young hip-hop fans of today really need to know about the history of rap—all of it, not some of it. A lot

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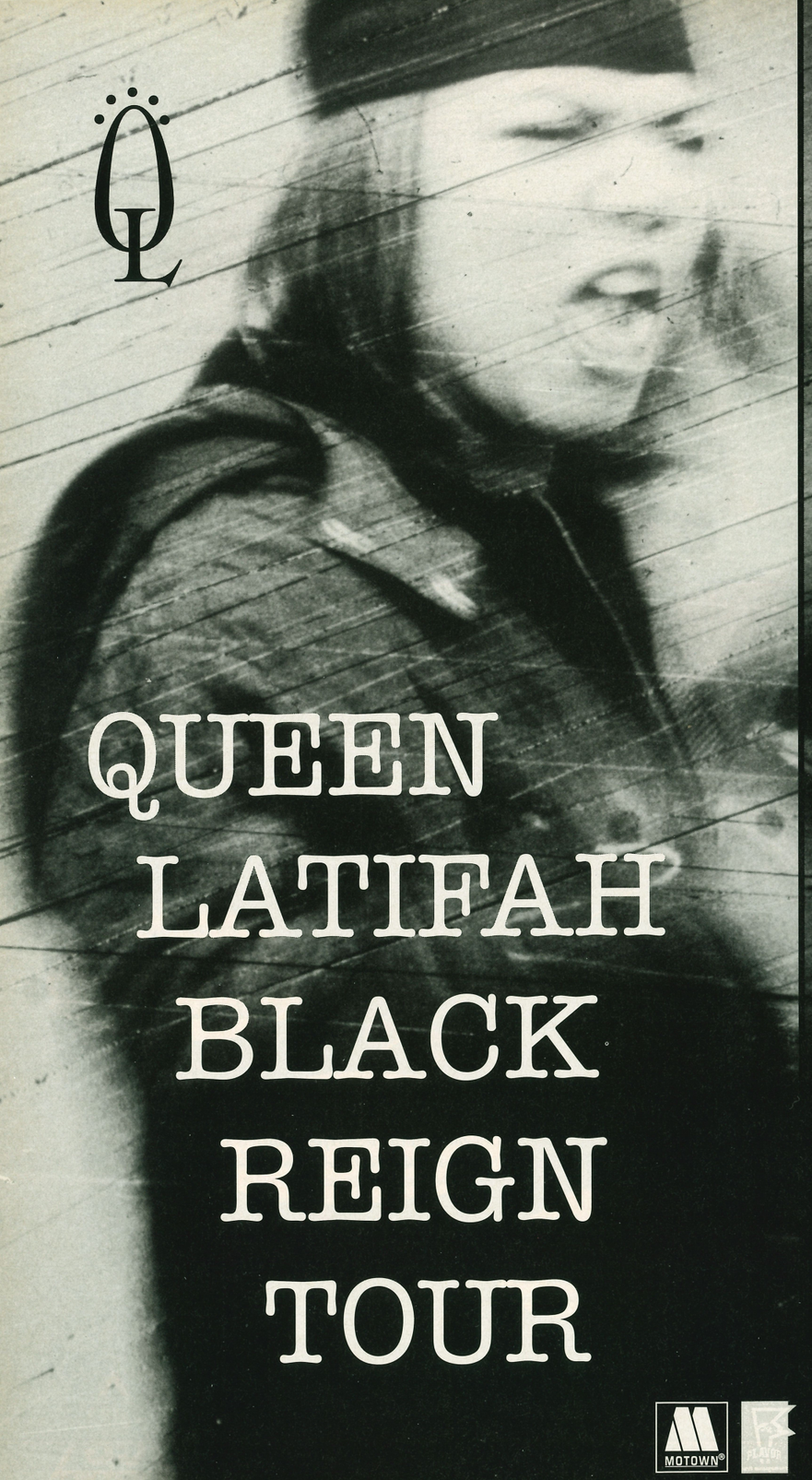

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LETTERS CONT.

of people don't know Sherrie Sher, Sha Rock, Sparky D, etc. A lot of people think that Spinderella is the first female DJ, but she isn't. Also, I would like to know why you don't do more articles on DJs. As a matter of fact, you don't give props to DJs period, male or female. Back in the days the DJs were the hook of the group. I'm sick and tired of DJs always having to play the background and believe me, there are a lot of other SOURCE readers who feel the same.

D-Swinga
Brooklyn, NY

***D**-Apparently, you haven't been keeping up with your SOURCE reading. Kid Capri, Red Alert, Ron G, Funkmaster Flex, FM2O, Doo Wop and other DJs have all been featured in recent issues. Not to mention, Flash, Bam and Herc—the DJs who started it all. We got more comin' too.—Ed.*

MASHED POTATOES

Personally, I think Domino is full of it. In your April '94 issue ["Jam On It," by Cheo H. Coker] he speaks of how he is not down with glorifying violence. I wonder if the drugs in his "Sweet Potato Pie" made him forget about his involvement in the Bloods and Crips album or did he think that no one noticed him in the "Bangin' On Wax" video? Now he wants to be all smooth and suave. Maybe he forgot that in Compton, LA and Long Beach, The Box features the video daily.

Elise
Compton, CA

I am sick and tired of critics comparing Snoop and Domino. OK, both are from Long Beach and have a kinda sing-songy style. But, Snoop's music, lyrics and his content are unfadeable compared to Domino. I think Domino dropped "Getto Jam" at the perfect time to ride the wave of Snoop's Long Beach sound and no matter what he says, he knows what's up.

Mr. Muthaf—ka'
Humboldt, IN

ERIC & RA BREAKUP

We all heard the never-ending stories of Eric and Parrish (EPMD), the classic rap duo going their separate ways. It was in every magazine that follows hip-hop. However, when the God Rakim Allah and Eric B went opposite ways, THE SOURCE didn't really add on. Ra is one of the most celebrated lyricists to ever come along in the business.

Lord Malik
Atlanta, GA

***Malik**—Stay tuned, we're on the case.—Ed.*

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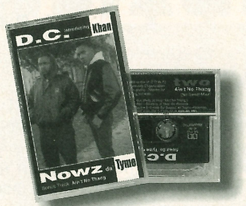

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MEDIA WATCH
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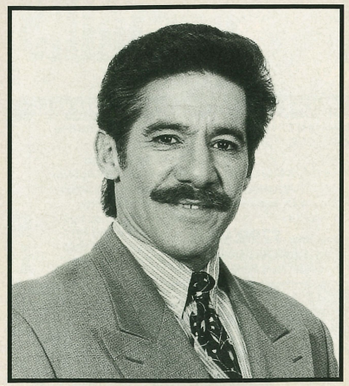
GERRY'S KIDS



GERALDO RIVERA: THE REF

This year's explosion of hip-hop coverage on network television [see "Media Watch," May '94] has slowed down noticeably, but some rap-related programming did manage to make it to the small screen. "Geraldo Live," the nightly CNBC talk show hosted by **Geraldo Rivera**, was merely the latest of its type to cover the controversy surrounding gangsta rap. The program may not have broken any new ground, but it was thoroughly entertaining. Nothing short of mayhem was generated by its diverse, emotionally-charged group of guests that included **Luther "Luke" Campbell** via satellite from Miami, anti-gangsta rap activists **James Madison** of the NAACP and **Dr. C. Delores Tucker** via satellite from Washington DC, as well as in-studio participants **Dr. Dre** and **Ed Lover**, **Schooly D** and **Freddie Foxxx**. This obvious logistical nightmare (a hot topic with too many mouths in too many places) forced Rivera to quickly shift his role from host to that of referee, quelling the many chaotic personal battles that broke out between guests.

Talk shows on gangsta rap are usually biased against the music, but "Geraldo Live" was thick with hip-hop crew. This shift of power clearly frustrated the anti-gangsta rap activists. The NAACP's Madison was constantly interrupted in mid-sentence. After several desperate pleas—"Will somebody let me finish?"—he finally threatened to remove his microphone and leave the set. Only Rivera's begging convinced him to stay. Just minutes before, Ed Lover had attacked the NAACP's credibility by saying, "You're not in the hood, Mr. Madison. You're not. **Minister Louis Farrakhan** is in the hood. You're too busy denouncing the positivity that he's trying to do."

Tucker came equipped with props, charts and pages and pages of gangsta rap lyrics, but her stodgy demeanor served only to blur her message. The running commentary she gave to her enlarged poster-sized board of the eight-framed cartoon drawing found inside **Snoop Doggy Dogg**'s album jacket was unintentionally comical. "You see what's in her mouth," she said. "It's very explicit. It's not a popsicle we're talking about."

Freddie Foxxx responded, "There's a lot worse things on the street that kids can get a hold of than a Snoop Doggy Dogg tape," adding that Black leaders seem to use "rap as a scapegoat to stay in the political arena and in front of the cameras." The show produced no viable solutions other than the now hackneyed gangsta rap/TV talk show formula of somebody recommending that the two sides should get together and discuss the problem in a different forum. Even if such an event were to occur, the likelihood of bridging any gaps is minute. The time is ripe for people to start realizing that whether or not gangsta rap is appropriate, it will not be stopped or censored.

POT LUCK

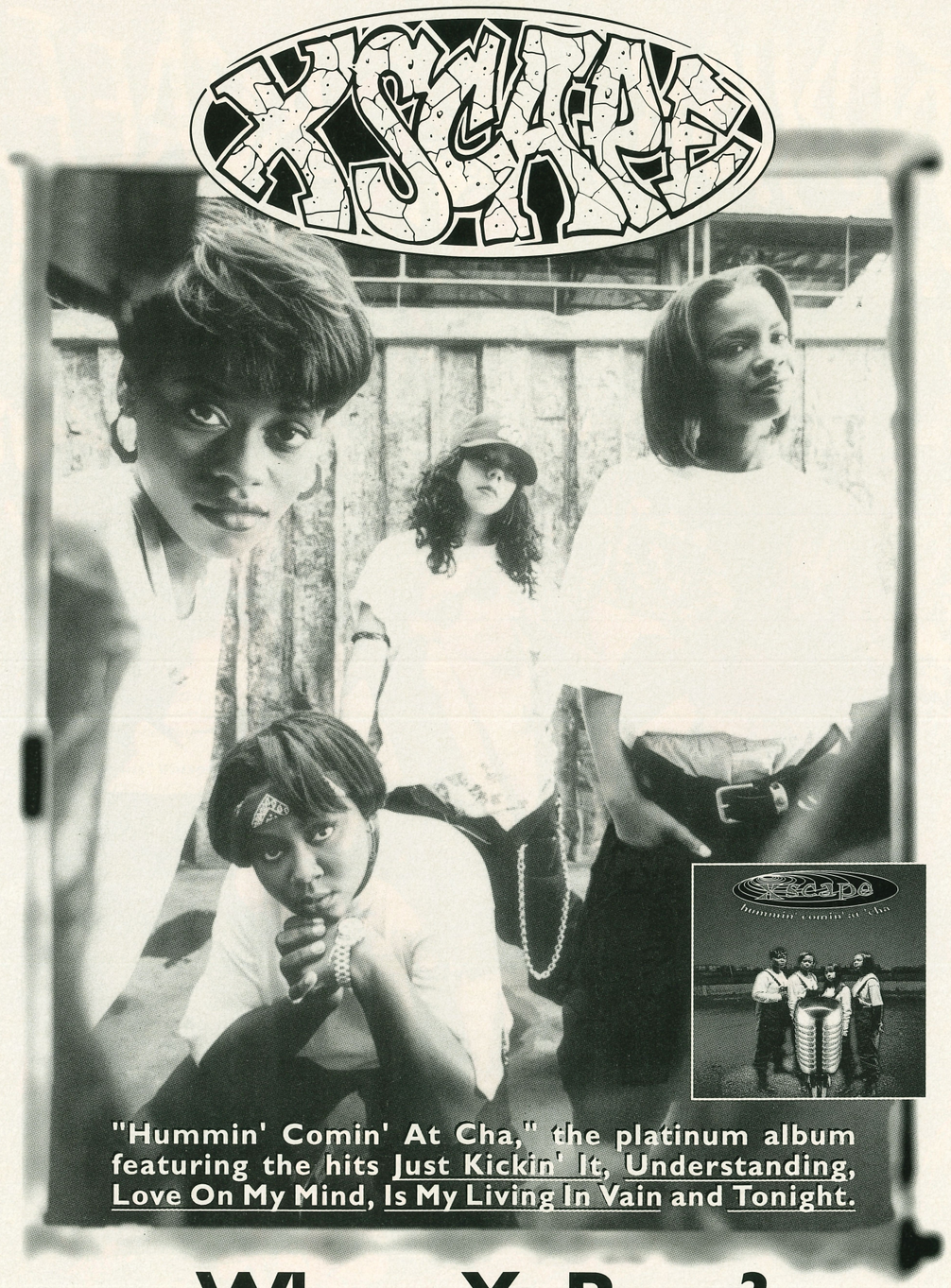
***High Times* occasionally expands its coverage** of rap beyond what is now a cult-like devotion to **Cypress Hill**—rare is an issue that doesn't contain at least one reference or photograph of the group. The magazine's March issue had an extra ounce of rap flavor. A piece entitled "Hemp Hemp Hooray!!" gave props and short bios to weed-friendly artists **Souls of Mischief**, **Wu-Tang Clan**, **Total Devastation** and **Jamal-Ski**, among others. A longer profile of **Mad Flava** went into detail about group leader **Cold Chris**'s life-long fondness for pot despite the fact that his father's marijuana smuggling landed him a life sentence in prison.

But the best piece was "Rickster's World," written by long-time **Beastie Boys** sidekick **Ricky Powell**. "It's fun to smoke pot just about anytime and anywhere, by yourself or with friends," he wrote. "But it's a little bit extra special when you're getting zooted with an entertainer whose work you enjoy." The must-see pictorial accompanying the piece featured photos of rap celebs **Eazy-E**, **Run**, Beastie Boy **Ad-Rock**, **Russell Simmons**, **Busta Rhymes** and **Del tha Funky Homosapien** getting high.

HOT DOGG

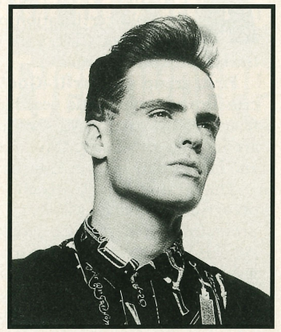
Snoop Doggy Dogg's two latest national TV musical performances were accomplished with vastly different styles. On the "Soul Train Music Awards" (which also included live performances by **Onyx** and **Digable Planets**), he rolled on stage riding shotgun in the Chronic mobile with **Dre** behind the wheel. The pair then turned the crowd out with a hardcore medley of "G Thang" and "What's My Name." As the musical guest on "Saturday Night Live," however, Snoop appeared minus Dre and plus live instruments. The band's mellow, melodic approach for "Gin And Juice" was an initial letdown, but always far from wack. Later, it actually provided an additional classy flair to Snoop's rendition of the episodic **Slick Rick** classic, "Lodi Dodi."

I'll take Snoop in any way *other than* the manner depicted on the cover of *National Lampoon*. The humor mag showed Snoop (actually it was Senior Associate Editor **Ben Wilson** pretending to be the rapper) sizzling in an electric chair. With smoke shooting out of his ears and the fictional execution complete, the headline underneath proclaimed, SNOOP DOGGY DOGG *UNPLUGGED*. S



EBONY & IVORY

WERE HAMMER AND VANILLA ICE SEPARATED AT BIRTH?

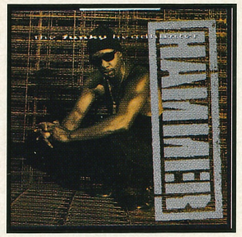


In 1990 Vanilla Ice and MC Hammer set the pop world on its ear, their all-style-no-substance brand of hip-hop lite enthralling a nation of confused and misguided music consumers. Even though gritty tales of reality and revolution ruled the streets at that time, Ice and Hammer made it a point to distance themselves as far as humanly possible from the rank and file of the Hip-Hop Nation. After all, they explained, they were not just "rappers," they were "entertainers"—gifted artists who transcended the confines of rap. Hell, Hammer even saw fit to drop the "MC" initials from his name.

Now, four years since their heyday, the glitter twins have returned to the scene, inexplicably at the same time, their fates seemingly intertwined forever. Their mission? To be accepted by the underground as legitimate rappers.

In light of this startling development we thought it would be interesting to examine their latest releases in detail. Why? To get the low down on their chameleon-like transformations from above ground to "underground." And to see how low two established artists are willing to go in their quest to jump on the bandwagon of popular taste. But most of all we wanted to make sure we got a few last laughs in, at their expense, before watching them dance off into the sunset—forever!

REGINALD C. DENNIS



TOPIC	HAMMER	VANILLA ICE
IMAGE:	1990 hip-hop Liberace/1994 OG gangsta	1990 hip-hop Elvis/1994 grunged-out surfer dude
PLAYED-OUT HIP-HOP TREND LATCHED ONTO:	The gangsta look	Weed induced hedonism
CURRENT MUSICAL CRUTCH:	G-funk	Blues guitar
FAVORITE GEAR:	Karl Kani	Miami Heat
MOST STARTLING VIDEO IMAGE:	Erect penis/Zebra-striped bikini briefs	Face mask/Blond dreadlocks
PURPOSE OF ALBUM:	Revenge and credibility	Credibility and revenge
WHAT HAPPENS EVERY TIME THESE MEN MAKE ALBUMS:	The Bay Area loses 35% of their hard-earned props	All white rappers forfeit 80% of their props
PEOPLE WHO MAY HAVE JEOPARDIZED THEIR CREDIBILITY WORKING WITH THESE ARTISTS:	Daz & Kurupt (The Dogg Pound)	Dave Gossett (EMI's A&R department)
MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:	Sold 25 million albums, promotes Evander Holyfield	Sold 11 million albums, made Madonna scream
NUMBER OF ARTIST PHOTOS IN LINER NOTES:	8	16
NUMBER OF TIMES "LOOKING HARD" IN LINER NOTES:	8	16
RAPPERS THEY DIS ON ALBUM:	Black Sheep, Redman, Run-DMC, Rodney O, Q-Tip, Serch	3rd Bass, Marky Mark, Hammer, Luke
OF THAT LIST, THE ONES THEY'D DEFEAT IN A BATTLE:	None	Marky Mark, Hammer, Luke (possibly)
NUMBER OF TIMES "OG" IS MENTIONED ON ALBUM:	100+	0
THE ART OF MACKING:	Claims to be a mack out of the Goldie school	Rolls up a "hooty mac"
LOWEST MOMENT:	Dancing for chicken	The movie *Cool As Ice*
NUMBER OF TIMES STREET SLANG IS BASTARDIZED:	0	10+ (i.e. "Roll 'em up/Roll up the hooty mac")
BIGGEST CAREER REGRETS (BESIDES CURRENT ALBUMS):	Dumping both the Too Big MC and the dancer with the triangle-shaped hairdo	Ditching his stunning collection of red-white-and-blue jumpsuits
AMOUNT OF TIME LEFT IN CAREER:	10 months	10 minutes

LIFE IS HECTIC

THE WU-TANG CLAN'S SUCCESS IS DAMPENED BY PERSONAL TRAGEDY

At a time when they should have been free to celebrate the gold certification of their debut album, members of the **Wu-Tang Clan** were instead being stung by pains native to the black male experience.

First, group member **U-God's** two-year-old son was caught in the crossfire of a gun battle near his home in Staten Island. A day later, a friend of the group was shot and killed in a separate incident. And around the same time, three members of Wu-Tang were pulled over and harassed by the San Francisco police during a visit to the city.

The first incident, involving U-God's son, **Dante Hawkins**, occurred on Sunday, March 13 while Wu-Tang was out in California promoting *Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)*. As Dante played outside his babysitter's home in the early evening, gunfire erupted and he was hit. The bullet destroyed one of the boy's kidneys and damaged his pancreas before exiting his body and piercing his hand. At press time, Dante was expected to live but remained in serious condition at Staten Island University Hospital. Police arrested two men in connection with the shooting, which they said may have resulted from a dispute over a woman.

The following night, long-time associate of the group, **Two-Cent** (real name: Erron Lewis) died after being shot once in the chest on Park Hill Avenue in Staten Island. Police said they are still searching for a suspect.

That same week, Wu-Tang members **Method Man**, **Raekwon** and **Ghost Face Killer**, along with their road manager, were leaving a downtown San Francisco shopping area when their van was pulled over by police. The group members reported that officers approached the van with guns drawn, ordering them to get out and lie on the ground. After complying, the group members say they were handcuffed and their backs were stepped on while their van was searched, but they were not told why they were being apprehended. They were then taken down to the station for questioning and told, just prior to their release 45 minutes later, that they fit the description of four Black males wanted for robberies in the area.

NOT SO VERY SIMPLE: TWO SHOOTINGS AND A RUN-IN WITH THE COPS MAKE THINGS DIFFICULT FOR THE WU-TANG CLAN

RCA RECORDS

"When we tried to explain who we were, our words were ignored and we were told to 'shut up,'" said Method Man in a written statement. "We were treated like animals and felt that our lives were threatened."

SFPD spokesman, **Officer Dave Ambrose**, offered no comment on the incident.

"When Wu-Tang Clan formed," **Prince Rakeem** said, "It was because nine young men wanted to develop a supportive family unit and try to make something better for ourselves and for our children. We all wanted to leave such daily tragedies behind."

DONNELL ALEXANDER

ALL IN THE SAME GANG?

NEW YORK GANG MEMBERS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS UNITE TO STOP THE VIOLENCE

New York City is known for its crime, not for its gangs. That stigma, synonymous with LA and its surrounding cities, has yet to make its way East. And New York's Black leadership is determined to keep it that way.

In April, the **Black and Latino Youth Empowerment** organization held a gang unity rally in Harlem to discuss quelling the spread of gang violence in the city. "We want to let them know that we are not going to let that foolishness [the rampant gang violence on the West Coast] start here," said **Melechi X Bell**, founder of the organization.

The rally was attended by over 300 Black and Latino gang and street organization members. Representatives of the **Zulu Nation**, **La Familia**, **Ñeta**, **Decepticons**, **Bronx Crips**, **Five Percent Nation** and other neighborhood groups listened to speeches by **Rev. Al Sharpton**, **Minister Conrad Muhammad** of the **Nation of Islam** and **Eric Adams**, head of the **Guardians Association**, a Black police officers organization.

"Nothing is wrong with having a gang," Sharpton told participants. "It's what you do with it. . . Don't deceive yourself into thinking you have a turf when you can't even protect your families or stop drug dealing in your community."

Minister Muhammad told the audience, "You've been given a script [by white society] of how you're supposed to act as gangsters and thugs and you're acting it out. But, they're using that script as a trap. When you act out that script in public, it frightens the white public. They put it out there so that when they slaughter you there is no public outcry because you've shown that you're animals. And the only way to deal with an animal is to kill it!"

RALLY SPONSOR MELECHI X BELL (2ND FROM LEFT) LOOKS ON AS CLOWN OF THE BOUNTY HUNTERS SHAKES HANDS WITH T.C. ISLAM OF THE ZULU NATION

STAN HONDA/1994 NEW YORK NEWSDAY

Bell, Sharpton, Muhammad, and Adams agreed to meet with gang and street organization representatives on the first of every month to monitor the progress of the gangs and to plan future community programs and events.

SHAWNEE

Nuthin' but King Shi*
The Choice of Playas Everywhere
OUTKAST
southernplayalisticadillacmuzik
Their debut album includes the #1 hit "Player's Ball."
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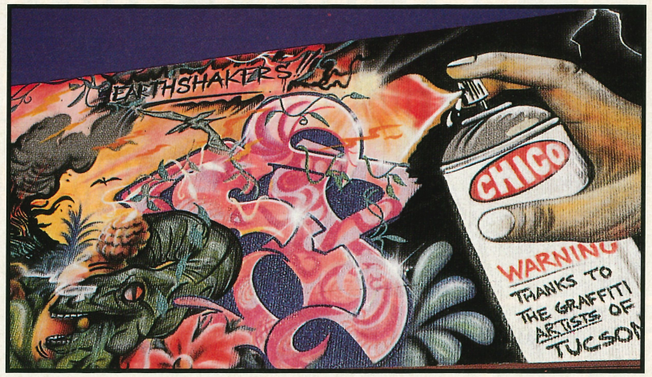
IN LIVING COLOR

NEW YORK GRAFFITI ARTISTS HOLD COURT IN TUCSON, ARIZONA



A PORTION OF THE COLLABORATIVE 110X10-FOOT MURAL CREATED AT "THE SPRAY-CAN ART SYMPOSIUM AND EXHIBITION"

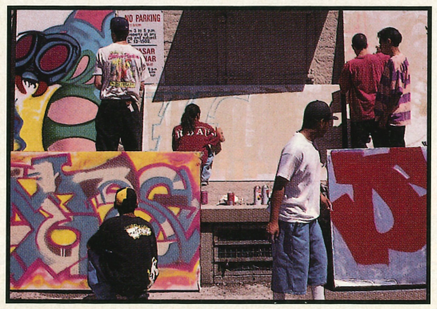
GRAF WRITERS (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): LEE, PINK, ALI, FUTURA AND STASH POSIN' ON THE PETROGLYPHS OUTSIDE TUCSON BELOW: SYMPOSIUM ATTENDEES PUTTIN' IN WORK OUTSIDE THE SIXTH CONGRESS GALLERY

Tucson, Arizona was recently the site of an innovative "Spraycan Art Symposium and Exhibition" featuring original school New York graf writers **Lee**, **Futura 2000**, **Chico**, **Lady Pink** and **Stash**. The purpose of the project, hosted by the **Sixth Congress Gallery**, was to expose Tucson's exploding graffiti scene and educate a largely uninformed public about the art form.

The group opened the event with a multi-media presentation for some 250 people, mostly graf writers. Using slides, video, music and the spoken word, the New York artists schooled the locals on the history and development of the hip-hop movement and broke down the science behind their individual styles of writing. A workshop was held the following day to teach spraypaint techniques. The NY artists, along with some local assistants, then created an impressive 110x10-foot mural atop the gallery. On the last day, a show of their newer and older art—including a mindblowing fifteen-foot-tall, black-and-white portrait of Frankenstein by Lee—was unveiled.

"There has been a great deal of controversy in Tucson about graffiti," said **Ali**, the symposium's emcee and an original school graf artist himself. "Most people react subjectively to the word itself, in much the same way they react to words like 'communism' and 'homeless'. Now that some of the world's best spraycan artists have left their mark on Tucson, anyone can see for themselves what this art form is all about. There are thousands of talented young people in this city who are seeking a way of life that is true to their culture and their spirit."

Already the seeds are beginning to sprout. As this is being written, two local grads of the symposium are creating a mural for a cafe directly across from the gallery, and several other downtown Tucson businesses have expressed interest. Considering that the same business community publicly denounced graffiti as a "visual blight" before the symposium, this represents a significant victory.



J. VALENTA

TOP PHOTOS: MARTHA COOPER/ BOTTOM: VALERIE GALLOWAY

BOOK REVIEW

PURE POETRY

WITH HIS NEW BOOK, "JOKER, JOKER, DEUCE," PAUL BEATTY TAPS THE HIP-HOP IMAGINATION

As an art form, rap is still in its infancy. There's no telling how far rap will go or the influence it will have on other forms of artistic expression. But poet Paul Beatty is already showing the way with his new book of poems, *Joker, Joker, Deuce* (Penguin Books, $12.95). Beatty is to hip-hop what Langston Hughes was to the blues—a poet with exceptional skill who can classify seemingly unrelated materials into fluid and rhythmic verse. To use his own words, Beatty's poetry is as smooth as...

sarah vaughan
holdin a note dipped in
bronze

Now that's smooth.

I know, some of you are probably like, "A book of poetry? Yeah, whatever." But it's not like that. Rap is poetry. The only difference between Paul Beatty and your favorite rapper is that Beatty doesn't make it into a studio. His gifts are the same. Fusing both the oral tradition of African cultures and the literary tradition of American culture, Beatty takes seriously the art of rap. Whether he's talking about the reduction of Malcolm X to a t-shirt commodity, speaking on the seductive nature of Gospel music, or probing his own childhood contradictions, each of his poems read like continuous freestyles, replete with inside jokes and quadruple entendres.

In poems such as "About the Author" and "Tap Tap on Africa," Beatty takes poetry to its highest function, the declaration of truth. Blending the present with the past, the personal with the political, he turns words into images that challenge the imagination:

the man at the store said
all i had to do
was put the mouth organ to my heart
he said ancestry is a hard disk
and like doctor seuss's elephant in horton hears a who
your soul never forgets

In *Joker, Joker, Deuce,* Beatty treats us to a wholly unique perspective, one which not only gives us insight into his turbulent mind, but also contains bits of truth about our Black selves. Each one must teach one and Paul Beatty is definitely pulling his whole weight.

STEVEN NOEL

SHYHEIM AKA THE RUGGED CHILD
THE NEW ALBUM
FEATURING ON AND ON

ANOTHER WU-TANG THANG

CASSETTE SINGLE REMIXED BY DJ PREMIER

FOR WORKS OF MART, INC.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: GEMMA CORFIELD, THOMAS WILSON AND RNS
ALL SONGS PRODUCED BY RNS FOR R.N.S. PRODUCTIONS
EXCEPT "LITTLE RASCALS" PRODUCED
BY PRINCE RHAKEEM FOR
WU-TANG PRODUCTIONS, INC.

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SHYHEIM
AKA
THE RUGGED CHILD

MODE 2 & KY FLY COLORS AND WOMEN MAKE FOR THE PERFECT BLEND IN PARIS, FRANCE

GRAF FLIX

GRAF EDITORS: CHINO/BYI & MATT LIFE
THANKS TO REAS/AOK

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PONE & MESS (DELTA) BURN MORE THAN HERB IN AMSTERDAM

DP: DRAKS PEICE BY **DRAX W.D** (WORLD DOMINATION REW) LONDON, ENGLAND **BOTTOM: REW** A HOLE IN THE FENCE MEANS TROUBLE FOR THE TRANSIT SYSTEM IN BERLIN, GERMANY '93

KATCH ONE SHOWS US HOW CANS GET SMOKED IN HAWAII, KAI

FUNKY JILZ
FROM THE JUNGLE NILZ

Back around when Jilz was 8 or 9, shorties out in Mariner's Harbor projects on Staten Island already knew: with two Fisher Price turntables and a few minor adjustments, he was well on his way to becoming a DJ. By the time he hit the teen ages, he decided to grab the mic.

Jilz remembers one Harbor Day back in '83 when he battled local rap heroes, the **Force MC's**. "**Stevie D** tore me out the frame," admits Jilz, "but I was the only shorty to step up, so I got a little props off that.

"When Rakim came out, I got serious. I gave up DJing and started rhyming full-time." When it came to making beats, Jilz always maintained a tight link with his childhood friend, **D-Rhythm**. His first underground buzz came from a song called "Eye Level" and began a new era which he now calls the "'94 Raw Era."

Together as the **Darc Mind Clique**, Jilz, **Red Eye** and **Legion of DUME** released an independent 12-inch featuring DUME's "Sons of Sam" with a "Darc Mind Inc." posse cut on the back. They represented at the **Lyricist Lounge** in New York and did their thing on the **Stretch Armstrong & Bobbito** show.

As momentum began to build, Jilz and D-Rhythm went crazy in the lab, giving birth to **Jungle Nilz Productions**. From last November to January, they completed a fifteen-song album of bombs entitled *Pure 94% Raw*. Now they're ready to expand their work with other artists and producers.

The voice might remind you of another God, but the sporadic flow and the subliminal styles will have you in the third dimension.

Each month in this column, we profile a talented group or artist who has yet to sign a label deal. Send top quality demo tapes with a description of the contents, a black-and-white photo and contact info to:

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CROOKLYN DODGERS
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"SH.FE. MC'S"
DE LA SOUL featuring QUEST
Tommy Boy

"RELEASE YOURSELF"
THE ALKAHOLIKS
LOUD/RCA

"I'M JUS' PLAYIN'"
THE NOTORIOUS BIG
Uptown/MCA

"MY MIND SPRAY"
JERU THE DAMAJA
Payday/London/PLG

"UNDER THE SUN"
JOE SYNYSTR
Pro Division/RAL

"ARE YOU READY"
THE BEATNUTS featuring GRAND PUBA
Relativity

"THA ANTHEM"
DREDKNOTZ
Elektra

"ONE LOVE"
NAS
Columbia

"LYRICS TO GO"
A TRIBE CALLED QUEST
Jive

"STREET LIFE"(RMX)
TRAGEDY
Tuff Break/A&M

"CUMMIN THRU YA..."
ARTIFACTS featuring REDMAN
Big Beat/Atlantic

"THE SHIT IZ REAL"(RMX)
FAT JOE
Relativity

"STREETS OF NEW YORK"
KOOL G RAP & POLO
Cold Chillin'

"PLAYER'S BALL"
OUTKAST
LaFace/Arista

"HANDS ON MY NINE"
DFC
Assault/Big Beat/Atlantic

CHI MODU

RHYME OF THE MONTH

"I'm feelin' another part of reality
Hit me when I represent the F-A-P
Straight from the bill-till
Then play the buildin'
I mean literally
When I say I make a killin'
From my cipher
See I'm fittin' to bust the piper
Original Heads represent the
Brooklyn all nighter. . .
Let's take a sec to think back
To the year of the 7-0
When Brooklyn was the place to go
Flow
On a journey up to Crown Heights
Ebbett's Field
Feel the reel-to-reel on your life
Trife
Individuals lived in their PJs
D Evil check my DJ
Hey
Play what I wanna play in the day
But in the night
I feel the right
To the left
Bucktown
Brooklyn break it down
Heads from state to state
Travel as they unravel the rate
Howard, Pat, Scott and Sutter
I remember way back in the days
Playin' hot peas and butter
Brother
If you want another lesson
Crooklyn
Session
Take it back
Black Smif-N-Wessun. . ."

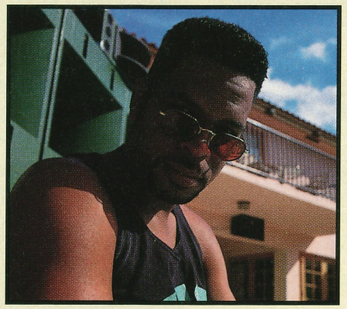
BUCK SHOT

from "CROOKLYN" off the the Crooklyn soundtrack

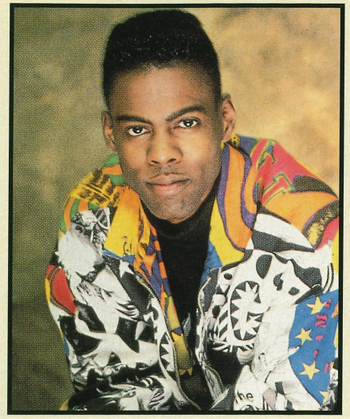
bits & pieces

FUNKADELIC RELIC REDMAN AND WU-TANG WARRIOR METHOD MAN ARE BOTH DUE TO DROP ALBUMS ON RAL/DEFJAM LATER THIS YEAR.

It's been a dramatic spring in the Hip-Hop Nation. . . •**Paris**, rapper and President of **Scarface Records**, was accused of assaulting an industry executive at the **National Assn. of Recording Merchandisers** convention in San Francisco on March 19. During a confrontation in the downtown Marriott Hotel lobby, Paris allegedly punched and kicked **Chris Joyce**, Executive Vice President of **INDI**—the company which distributed Scarface Records up until last November. According to Joyce, when Paris moved his label to **Priority Records**, he committed a breach of contract that put him in debt to INDI for $250,000 in paid advances. Paris, who did not comment on the physical altercation, issued the following response: "Contrary to Chris Joyce's account, INDI owes us a lot of money. We're currently exploring our legal options". . . •**Tupac Shakur** was sentenced to serve 15 days in the LA county jail for assault and battery on *Menace II Society* director **Allen Hughes**. The judge also ordered that Tupac do 45 days of community service and pay a fine of $5,400. The incident took place last year when Shakur, angry at being dropped from the movie's cast, showed up on the set of a **Spice 1** video and swung on Hughes. Meanwhile, Shakur is still facing charges of sodomy and rape on a young woman in New York and charges of aggravated assault on two police officers whom he allegedly shot during an altercation in Atlanta. . . •In a rare display of modesty, **Luther Campbell** decided against posing "in the nude" for the August issue of **Playgirl** magazine. Campbell was scheduled to participate in a layout for the magazine called "The Ten Sexiest Men in Music," along with rock artists such as **Meat Loaf** and **Sting**. According to his publicist, Luke bowed out at the last minute when he realized that not only was he the only minority in the layout, but he was also the only artist scheduled to pose completely nude. Luke may not be selling his own flesh for now, but he's continuing his quest to market the female body with his very own girlie magazine, called **Scandalous**. The first issue, which is described as "multi-cultural" and full of centerfolds (four to be exact), should be released in September of this year. . . •The **Detroit Police Department** has begun an investigation to flush out officers involved in a rap group called **Out Cold Cops**. The group, which performed in disguise last December on the **Jerry Springer Show**, has released an album called *Diary of a Killer Cop* which details the pleasures of brutalizing and murdering criminals. . . •A much publicized **Goods for Guns** concert sponsored by Elektra Entertainment and **Fernando Mateo** (the New York businessman behind the **Toys for Guns** program) turned out to be a failure. Under the program, **New York Police** precincts were going to give a pair of concert tickets to anyone who turned in a gun. When fewer than thirty guns were turned in, the March 18 concert—featuring **Run-DMC**, **MC Lyte**, **Heavy D** and others—had to be cancelled. . . •**Queen Latifah** has asked the **NAACP** to investigate claims and charges against **Continental Airlines** for "unfair practices and racial bias" toward Black clientele. Latifah and two associates claim to have been wrongfully thrown off a flight from Washington National Airport to Newark International after an altercation ensued between them and a "hostile" stewardess. . . •The new **Main Source** album with rapper **Mikey D** will not be released on **Wild Pitch Records**. The group was dropped from the label in March and is currently seeking a new deal. According to new Senior Vice President of Marketing, **MC Serch**, "The conflicts between upper management—prior to my being here—and the group became just too complicated and we decided it would be best for them to seek out other opportunities." In June, Wild Pitch is planning to put out a "classics album" of previously unavailable and hard-to-find 12-inch cuts from **Large Professor**, **GangStarr**, **Chill Rob G** and more. . . •Comedian **Chris Rock**, *Saturday Night Live* alumnus and creator of the film *CB4*, has written and produced his own comedy special for **HBO**, entitled "Big Ass Jokes." The special, which was taped before a capacity crowd at Atlanta's Center Stage Theater, will air on Thursday, June 16 at 11:00 p.m. Rock is currently in negotiations with **Universal Pictures** to do a second feature film, *The Calm Down Guy*, this summer. . . •The **Beastie Boys** and **House of Pain** joined rockers **Slaughter** and **Scott Ian** of **Anthrax** for some snowboarding action in Big Bear Lake, CA on March 8. The occasion was **Board Aid**, a **LIFEbeat/*Warp*** magazine-sponsored event that raised over $60,000 to help the fight against AIDS. . . •The new **Spike Lee** joint, *Crooklyn*, is set to drop May 13. The movie, which takes a dramatic view of family life in Brooklyn, NY in the '70s, will release a soundtrack in early May. The first single, self-titled "Crooklyn," is an inspired blend of **Q-Tip**'s production skills and the dope lyricism of **Masta Ace**, **Buckshot** from **Black Moon** and the sorely-missed **Special Ed**. . . •**Digable Planets** and **Dr. Dre** won the rap categories at the 36th annual **Grammy Awards** on March 1st. Digable took the Best Rap Performance by a Group award for their single, "Rebirth of Slick," and Dre took Best Rap Soloist with "Let Me Ride," edging out **LL Cool J**'s "Stand By Your Man," **MC Lyte**'s "Ruffneck," **Paperboy**'s "Ditty" and **Sir Mix-A-Lot**'s "Just Da Pimpin' In Me". . . •In certification news, the man you love to hate, **Eazy E**, recently saw his EP, *It's On (Dr. Dre) 187um Killa*, go double platinum. And the man you love to love, **Shaq**, just passed the platinum mark himself with his debut album, *Shaq Diesel*.

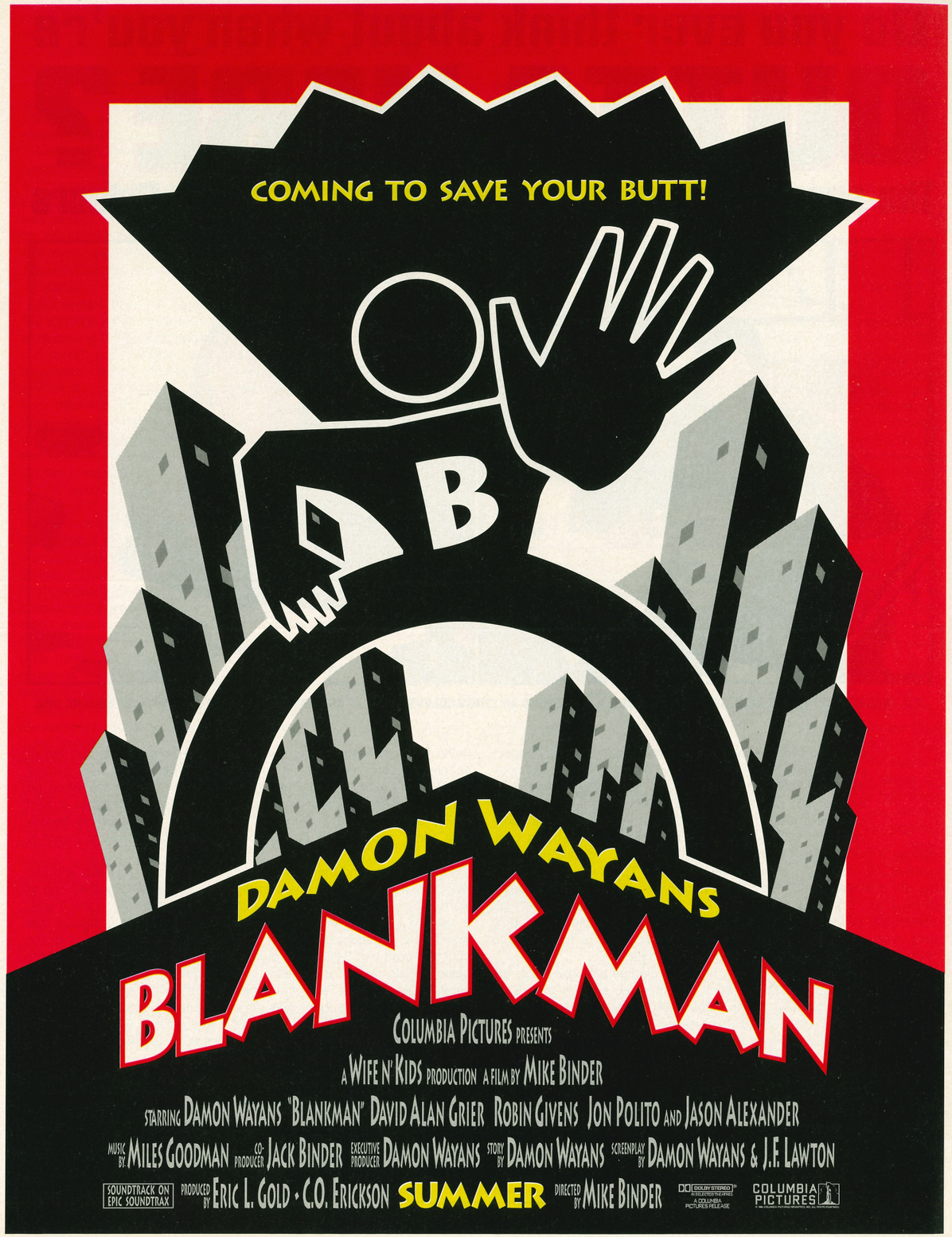


MIAMI PLAYBOY: LUKE IS PLANNING TO PUT OUT HIS VERY OWN "GIRLIE" MAGAZINE, CALLED "SCANDALOUS," IN SEPTEMBER



CHRIS ROCK PREMIERES HIS HBO COMEDY SPECIAL, "BIG ASS JOKES," IN JUNE

BOTTOM PHOTO: CHI MODU/C²



Do you ever think about when you're OUTTA HERE?

The spectacular rise and near-death of Cross Colours

T.J. WALKER (LEFT) AND CARL JONES (RIGHT) BUILT AN EMPIRE AT CROSS COLOURS, BUT IT CRUMBLED. NOW, THEY'RE BACK AT SQUARE ONE.

In a mere three years, Cross Colours achieved every aspect of the American dream. It got the money: in 1992 the company had $89 million in sales and was forced to turn away another $67 million due to overwhelming demand. It got the fame: everybody from South Central to suburbia was sporting the in-your-face fashions that cemented hip-hop's position as a global style trendsetter. It got the props: *Fortune* magazine praised the company's owners, Carl Jones and T.J. Walker, for "changing the business world," and *Black Enterprise* magazine named Cross Colours its "Company of the Year" in 1993. Cross Colours even got community service points for promoting peace on its clothes, putting African-Americans to work in Los Angeles and starting a foundation to help young people stay in school and avoid gangs.

But the magic carpet ride is over now. The clothes are played out, the employees are laid off and the bank accounts are emptier than a 40 ounce on Sunday morning. Cross Colours went from earning the title of *Black Enterprise*'s 10th-ranked Black-owned company (ahead of Black Entertainment Television and the company that owns *Essence* magazine) to bouncing paychecks and getting evicted from its extra-large office complex. The company announced in March that it was selling all its manufacturing operations to pay off millions of dollars in debts and said it would start licensing its designs to outside contractors. A model for African-American economic achievement has become an example of what *not* to do when you blow up.

Carl Jones was already paid before he used his life savings to start Cross Colours. A successful designer and co-owner of the Surf Fetish beachwear company, the Memphis, Tennessee, native was earning $200,000 a year in salary and another million in bonuses when he decided to start his own company with T.J. Walker, a designer at Surf Fetish. So Jones sold his interest in Surf Fetish, mortgaged his Beverly Hills home, and sold his Ferrari and 17 Harley Davidsons to invest in himself.

Jones, Walker and their first two employees, David Stennett and Eric Walker, put in crazy long hours seven days a week getting their line of jeans, shirts and jackets off the ground in 1990. And what a line it was: a startling collection of iridescent colors and exaggerated shapes that fused '70s outrageousness with '90s flavor. The gear appealed to the soul of B-boys and B-girls on a quest for fashion props and satisfied the basic fashion plea of the ghetto: Look at me! "In the beginning it was great," said Stennett, who met Jones in 1989 while working at a Club Med in Mexico where Jones was honeymooning. "Black folks were kicking ass. The hours were real long, but it was great, it was like a family-oriented thing. We had about 12 employees in '90 and '91, and Carl was working those long hours right along with us."

In 1991, Cross Colours's first year of business, the company made $15 million in sales and moved into four South Central buildings with a total of 80,000 square feet. The next year sales reached $89 million, and demand was so high the company had to turn down another $67 million in orders because it couldn't make the clothes fast enough. In January 1993, Cross Colours moved into a $44,000 per month, 150,000 square foot complex in the City of Commerce, about four miles southeast of downtown LA. All the Cross Colours clothes were designed, cut and warehoused in that space, which was a far cry from the original 3,000 square feet in South Central. By early 1993, Cross Colours's payroll had expanded to about 250 people, and the company was raking in extra millions from sales of the explosively hot Karl Kani line, which was owned by Cross Colours's parent company, Threads for Life (Jones and Walker own Threads for Life). Sales declined about 6 percent in 1993, but still totaled $72 million.

Jones, who owns 90 percent of Cross Colours, justifiably reaped the rewards of his company's success. He bought a house in Beverly Hills, a little set of duplex apartments in the upscale suburb of Doheny Estates, and a luxurious crib in a Doheny Estates neighborhood that was already the home of celebrities like Diana Ross and Ice T. His stable of vehicles included two Ferraris, a convertible Rolls Royce Corniche and two Range Rovers (not counting his wife's Benz and convertible Jaguar). Even his Rottweiler was lamping in a $500-per-month dog training school.

But while Cross Colours was blowing up, its finances were crumbling. The company had always had trouble with distribution, and retailers were getting fed up with getting half of their orders, or getting the pants one month and the matching shirts several months later. These problems were compounded by the debt Cross Colours had accumulated to pay for its expansion. As the delivery problems mounted, the cash flow started slowing down. Not only did this keep Cross Colours from paying its bills, but it hindered production because there was no money to pay for the raw materials.

"We would have several million dollars on order, but it takes several million to get the fabric, the buttons, whatever," says Eric Walker, who was the Midwest regional sales manager before he resigned in December 1993. "That money just wasn't there. Hypothetically, we were making millions of dollars, but it wasn't in-house. And when we didn't come up with the money for stuff we had gotten on credit, that screwed us up even further. Contractors want to hold your garments for ransom, but you need the garments to get the money to pay them."

Many former Cross Colours employees say the delivery problems stemmed from too-quick growth and Jones's inexperience in manufacturing. Even though Jones, who graduated from a Los Angeles fashion school, was co-owner of a $20 million a year business at Surf Fetish, his employees said he was out of his league when trying to run a business that bought raw clothing materials, cut it to size, sewed it up and then shipped it to retailers. "The bottom line was that Carl had no experience in the business," says Jeffrey Tweedy, a fashion industry veteran who was vice president of sales and marketing for Threads for Life from April 1993 until the end of that year. "He hit a home run with Cross Colours and it took off. But he wasn't smart enough to get the right people in there [to run the business].

"If you're playing craps and all of a sudden you roll three sevens in a row, you're gonna stick the money in your pocket," he continues. "But he had no control, no business experience, no education on how to control his business and take it to the next level. You've got to get to the point where you can hit a home run every inning."

The cash problems didn't affect Jones's lifestyle, however. Several former employees say all of his bills were paid directly out of Cross Colours accounts. The bills included payments for Jones's apartment complex, two homes and various cars, his estranged wife's Hollywood Hills house and cars, a Mercedes for a girlfriend, and other relatively minor expenses like car phones and florist bills. "You can quote me on this," says Jones's former personal assistant, Rhonda Fortner. "He spent his money on houses, hoes and cars. And I could see if he was cashing the sisters down, but it was the Mexican tricks he was paying." One employee says she messengered Jones a Cross Colours check for $340,000 to put a down payment on his Doheny Estates home, and that the company paid more than $100,000 in cash for each of his two Ferraris. "I definitely think all that spending had a lot to do with the company's financial problems," the former high-level employee said. "You can't go out and pay cash for Ferraris and then not pay your bills. Business wasn't meant to be run that way."

Jones maintains that the only problem Cross Colours had was that it grew too quickly. "My personal lifestyle had nothing to do with the problems the company was having. I started the company with my personal money. I mortgaged my house, sold everything I owned. I can't help it if I'm successful," he says. "I don't feel guilty about what I've owned. In other words, I don't feel guilty that I'm successful, and I think that people who don't like that have a personal problem with me.

"All the employees who worked for the company made a lot of money. They were taken care of very well," he continues. "I also gave a lot of people a chance, especially a lot of African-Americans, and some of them weren't as experienced as I would have liked them to be. But I don't feel bad about it, because I gave a lot of people a start. I think anyone, white or Black, experienced or not experienced, would have had a very difficult time managing the kind of business we had at the time."

But the problem was that Jones was maintaining a players' lifestyle, spending less and less time in the office while asking his employees to take pay cuts. "You can't come to work and tell people life is critical and then drive off in a new Ferrari," said a former high-level employee who was laid off in November. "You can't lay off 50 people in a week and then drive up in your wife's new Jag. Yeah, you've worked hard and you've earned it, but people don't understand that." Echoing these sentiments, Fortner, Jones's former assistant, says many employees resented their boss. "They wouldn't have minded how large he was until he pulled up in that big red airplane," she said in reference to his Ferrari. "Then niggas started getting feisty." Other employees felt that they weren't getting the credit—or the salaries—they deserved after helping make Cross Colours one of the most important names in fashion. "There's no glory in not being able to pay your rent because you're working for the hottest clothing company in America," says Stennett, who was vice president of marketing until he resigned in October 1992.

> IT ALL CAME CRASHING DOWN IN LATE 1993. THE LAYOFFS STARTED IN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER. . . THE COMPANY LOST ITS BIGGEST ACCOUNT.

It all came crashing down in late 1993. The layoffs started in September and October; in November 100 people were cut loose and the company lost its biggest account, the Merry Go Round chain. Jones had about $2.5 million in unsecured bank loans that he needed to pay off. A former high-level employee estimates that he needed about $10 million to pay off the loans, his other debts (including personal ones, like the $17,000 he owed to American Express) and start over. In a desperate grab for cash, the company started selling to any retailer who would buy, including letting top-quality clothes go to off-price buyers that sold Cross Colours gear in discount stores, side-by-side with old or damaged clothing of other brands. "He saw it was coming to an end and said, 'Let me get what I can,' " a former Cross Colours executive says.

Eric Walker, who had been with Cross Colours "since it was a piece of paper," didn't get paid for more than three months. Then in December, with about 30 to 40 employees left, paychecks started bouncing. "I had grown men literally crying on the phone saying they couldn't buy Christmas presents for their kids," Fortner says. "Salesmen were saying they were gonna beat the shit out of Carl because they were gonna lose their house." Fortner's story about how she left the company is typical of several former Cross Colours employees: After a week of Christmas vacation, she was getting ready for work the morning of January 3 when Jones called from his car phone with bad news: "Today is everybody's last day." When Fortner came into the office that afternoon to pick up the two days salary the company owed her, the pictures were off the walls and people were moving out. The landlord had taped a notice to the front door. Cross Colours was being evicted.

We haven't seen the last of Cross Colours, of course. Jones and Walker have about 10 employees now, and they're back to doing what

BY JESSE CHADAPO WASHINGTON

sent them to the top in the first place: designing. They could make plenty of money through licensing, because all the headaches and financial risks involved in actually making the clothes are left to professionals. In the eyes of the business community, Cross Colours is making an astute move. Karen Raugust, editor of the fashion industry newsletter, *The Licensing Letter*, says designers are typically paid about 5 percent of the wholesale price of their garments, plus royalties. Manufacturers also must guarantee that they'll sell a certain amount of clothes, which means guaranteed cash flow. Many mainstream designers such as Pierre Cardin, Givenchy and Calvin Klein do a lot of licensing; there's no stigma attached to it in the industry.

"Regardless of what went right and what went wrong," Jones says, "we pulled off something that was phenomenal. We took a $200,000 company and turned it into a company with almost $100 million in sales. We employed more African-Americans than any other apparel company in the world. Sure, we regret losing that, but I think what's important is that it became a business decision. It's important to keep the name and the product going and have Cross Colours as a successful Black company that did not fail. Obviously in business we've had hurdles to jump over, but I don't say we have failed. Because of the economy and growth of the company, we had to change gears. We didn't say 'Oh well' and walk away. We think it's important that our legacy goes on, that young people see that when things get tough, you do things better and more carefully."

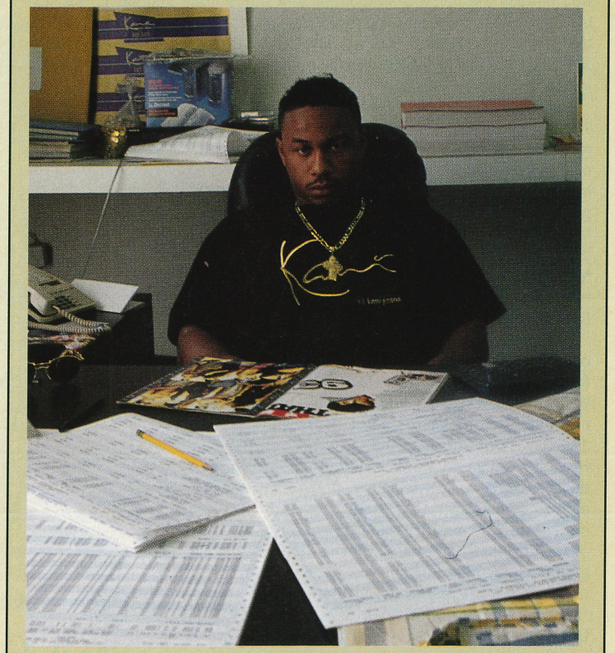
CROSS COLOURS'S FUTURE RESTS LARGELY ON ITS NEW LINE OF CLOTHES, DUE OUT THIS FALL.

Cross Colours's future rests largely on its new line of clothes, which is due out this fall. The bright colors will be replaced with tans, browns and other soft hues. The silhouettes will be trimmed back a bit, and the logos will be less conspicuous. The gear will be on the rugged tip, of course, since the ruffneck vibe shows few signs of playing itself out. Will it still be marketed to the street? "Absolutely," Jones says. "That's what we built the company on." Whether the street still wants Cross Colours, however, is another question. A culture that prizes authenticity, originality and trueness to the game could be reluctant to buy a brand that, when last heard from, was completely overexposed in both the hip-hop and mainstream markets. "You can't play yourself out and then come back and say 'I was only kidding,'" says April Walker, the New York-based designer of Walker Wear gear who was briefly a part of the Threads for Life family. Or, as a former Cross Colours executive says, "Do you think Milli Vanilli had credibility when they came back out and were singing? I don't think you have too many chances to jack your public."

Cross Colours isn't the only clothing company to have financial problems—Southern California is notorious for flash-in-the-pan apparel makers that die with the trends they exploit. But despite its troubles, Cross Colours is different. First, it kicked down doors in the fashion industry so other talented Black designers could enter. If not for Cross Colours, the nation's major department stores would still be more white-bread than Wonder. But more importantly, Cross Colours helped lead the way as hip-hop broke out of the pigeonhole it had been stuffed into and exploded as a major influence not only in music, but in mainstream American culture. Cross Colours was a pioneer. And damn, if Run-DMC can be born again, then there's still plenty of hope for Cross Colours. S

Still The Real Deal

After parting ways with Cross Colours, Karl Kani gets a fresh start



No, Karl Kani is not out of business. He's not bankrupt. He's not a front for a white company. And he's not down with Cross Colours. . . anymore.

Ever since Cross Colours started having money problems in late 1993, the rumor mill has been churning out stories about Karl Kani (real name: Carl Williams), designer of the clothing line that was owned and distributed by Threads for Life, the parent company of Cross Colours. What really happened is that the money problems at Cross Colours allowed Williams to buy the company back from Threads for Life. "I was in a partnership, but I thought it was time for me to go," Williams says. "Cross Colours and Karl Kani, we were both going after the same market. It's hard to have two companies that are supposed to be working together going after the same customers."

At 25 years old, Williams now finds himself in much the same position that Cross Colours was in two years ago. He's the sole owner of a line that has the attention of the fashion world, crazy street credibility and a healthy cash flow (sales of $45 million in 1993). So what did he get from the Cross Colours experience? "I learned what not to do," Williams says, the edge in his voice suggesting that a few unresolved conflicts remain between him and Threads for Life. "Now I can foresee situations that arose with Cross Colours, see where they had problems and avoid them."

There's one more thing Williams learned from his association with Cross Colours. "Right now brothers on the streets want to know that whoever designs the line ain't perpetratin' a fraud," he declares. "Be Black today, tomorrow and the day after. Karl Kani is still 101 percent Black-owned. And it will always be that way." **JCW**

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WU-TANG CLAN
C.R.E.A.M.
TOP QUALITY
WHAT
THA ALKAHOLIKS
MARY JANE
SHA'DASIOUS
U KANT PLAY ME
SWV
ANYTHING
BLACKGIRL
90'S GIRL
CHANTAY SAVAGE
GIVE IT TO YA
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AFRO-PLANE
SHINE
JAMMIN' AT THE HOUSE
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Ruuff Tears of Wentworth

Photo by: Fernando Hernando

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CURBSIDE CASUAL

UNDERGROUND CLOTHING COMPANIES ARE GOING BEYOND THE SIMPLE CAP AND T-SHIRT THING TO BRING YOU THE NEXT WAVE IN STYLE. WITH CLEANER CUTS AND FATTER FABRICS THEY'RE STILL ON THE DL—BUT WITH A LOT MORE FLAVOR.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Suekwon
MAKE UP: Karim Orange
FASHION EDITORS: Julia Chance and Sonya Magett
ASSISTANTS: Jennifer Meertens and Tracie Garvin

MALIK: rugby $56, denim shorts $42 and ivy cap $22 all by 555 Soul; socks by Keepers International; All Star Low sneakers $32 by Converse.

ABOVE *(from left to right)*
ALEX: vest $30, army pants $32 and wool skully $11 all by Headhunters; t-shirt $18 by BAMN!; Samba Nubuck Gum sneakers $50 by Adidas.
KYLE: nylon vest $60 and jeans $60 both by G.A.T.; Pro Model sneakers $60 by Adidas; ivy cap $27 by Tip; belt by Maroc Accessories.
CRYSTAL: Athletic Numbers dress $72 and jersey mesh ivy cap $20 both by Living Doll; Hi-Heeled sneakers $58 by Converse.
FRANCESCA: hooded nylon vest $70 with matching shorts $36 and sports bra $36 all by Mossimo; The Pump Vertical sneakers $110 by Reebok.
MALIK: nylon jacket $85 by Grip; t-shirt $18 by BAMN!; jeans $70 by Pride; Pro Model sneakers $60 by Adidas; belt by Maroc Accessories. All jewelry by Versani. All socks and over-the-knee socks by Keepers International.
LEFT *(from left to right)*
MALIK: sweatshirt $48 by Positive Wear; Silver Tab jeans $52 by Levi's; Redwood boots $98 by Skechers.
KYLE: retro top $58 and shorts $118 by Sjobeck; Puma Suedes $55 by Puma.
FRANCESCA: hemp baseball jersey $128 and shortalls $116 by Genuine G Sportswear; Andretti tee $50 by Pleasure; Road Ranger sneakers $49 by Skechers; cap $26 by Greed.
ALEX: polo shirt $42, denim shorts $44 and visor $20 all by Stoopid Clothing; Redwood boots $98 by Skechers. All jewelry by Versani. All socks by Keepers International.

MALIK: denim shirt with houndstooth front $50 and denim shorts $45 by Riteous Clothz; boxers $28 by 555 Soul; belt by Maroc Accessories; canvas boots $45 by NaNa.
CRYSTAL: Fitted denim vest $86, baby tee $42 and ivy cap $36 by Stussy Sista; skirt $37 by Sjobeck; Urban Ranger sneakers $54 by Skechers.

ABOVE *(from left to right)*
KYLE: t-shirt $24 and corduroy shorts $60 by Stussy; socks by Keepers International; Redwood boots $98 by Skechers; wool skully $20 by PNB Nation.
FRANCESCA: V-inset dress $68 by Pleasure; sneakers $55 by Simple; bandanna from street vendor.
ALEX: retro top $63 and The Record bag $48 by Drawls; Silver Tab jeans $52 by Levi's;
Ring by Versani.

BELOW *(from left to right)*
ALEX: nylon jacket $55 by PNB Nation; shorts $44 by Tribal Gear; Korsika Hi boots $95 by Adidas.
KYLE: hooded nylon jacket with matching shorts $100 by Kick The Dog; t-shirt $18 by No Joke; Streetball 111 Mid sneakers $90 by Adidas; wool skully $20 by PNB Nation. Bracelet and ring by Versani.

CRYSTAL:
hockey jersey $75 and jeans $75 both by Tasty; Old Skool sneakers $40 by Vans; beanie $20 by Billy Mecca NY.

CONSUMER INFO LIST
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Converse (800) 554-CONS
Drawls (213) 773-9175
G.A.T. (213) 489-2828
Genuine G Sportswear (510) 428-4041
Greed (213) 746-5639
Grip (212) 388-2269
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Keepers International available at major department stores and specialty shops
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Pleasure (213) 223-1677
PNB Nation (212) 989-3650
Positive Wear (404) 636-6350
Puma (800) 448-PUMA
Reebok (800) 843-4444
Riteous Clothz (800) 200-7572
Simple (800) 982-2432
Sjobeck (213) 624-5432/683-1232
Skechers (800) 456-3627
Stoopid Clothing (619) 239-3862
Stussy and Stussy Sista (212) 274-8855/(714) 474-9255
Tasty (612) 874-1663
Tribal Gear (619) 429-5009
Vans (800) 926-4462
Versani (212) 228-7777
555 Soul (212) 995-9252

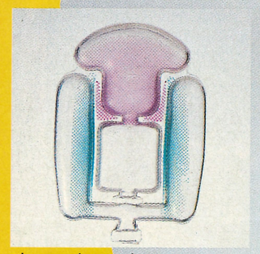
FLAVORS of the month

Compiled and Edited by: JENNIFER WILLIAMS
Photography by: TONY CENICOLA

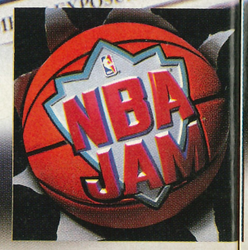
NIKE does it again!
Made just in time for summer, Nike brings forth two of their fattest creations yet. The Air Trainer Max^2, $125, and the Air Max^2, $135. Both are due in stores by July 1st. Dial (503) 505-9494 for the store nearest you.

American Needle and Marvel Comics
You will definitely enjoy baseball caps that feature your favorite authentic comic book and television cartoon characters. For only $20 at your nearest sporting goods store, you plant a piece of animation history on your dome.

EastPak Packs it up!
These stylish commuter bags are lightweight yet have superior strength and are resistant to abrasions. They come in an assortment of colors and may be purchased for $45 at your nearest sporting goods store.

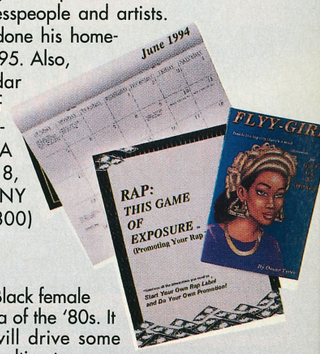


This is what makes an Air Max an Air Max. It slows impact force and lessens the shock to the system. Of course, it's also what keeps the shoe so light.



NBA JAM!
The most-played arcade game in history is finally available for Sega Genesis, Super NES and Game Gear—and it's all that! Top NBA players hold court for frantic two-on-two roundball action, complete with power slams and an announcer caught up in the excitement. Is it the shoes? NES: $74.95, Genesis: $64.95, Game Gear: $44.95

"Rap This Game Of Exposure" and "Music Entreperneurs Calander."
Finally, the in's and out's of the rap game explained in elaborate detail for aspiring businesspeople and artists. Entrepreneur Walt Goodridge has done his homework, so you won't get jerked, $69.95. Also, for $5 you can purchase a calendar that features all of the dates of important industry seminars and confrences. Send all money orders to "A Company Called W," P.O. Box 618, Church St. Station, New York, NY 10008-0618. Visa/MC orders (800) 409-1272.



"FLYY GIRL"
Omar Tyree tells a story of a young Black female coming of age during the hip-hop era of the '80s. It also shows how far materialism will drive some teenagers to quench their thirst for ultimate props, $12.95. To order send a money order to Mars Productions, P.O. Box 34274, Washington, DC 20043

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MICROPHONE CHECK

CALL OF THE WILD
OUTKAST

Just before rap critics could write off Atlanta as a relocation place for disgruntled hip-hop artists (Erick Sermon, Tragedy, Tupac, Too Short, etc), in steps the youngsters from Outkast to prove that a strong underground scene already existed there. And like it has been proven with East Oakland, Long Beach, Long Island and Compton, 'hoods with lots of grass, sunshine and relative isolation make for inspired, thumpin' music.

One listen to their smash single "Player's Ball" and you're hooked. Eighteen-year-olds Andre "Dre" Benjamin and Antoine "Big Boi" Patton, with the help of TLC producers Organized Noise, introduce themselves with the perfect concoction of gutbucket funk basslines, Curtis Mayfield falsetto choruses and potent rhyme flows. Imagine Too Short's dopefiend beat and '70s mackadocious image combined with the agile vocalistics of the Hieroglypics crew and you'll have the angle needed to understand these youngsters. They tell stories about the other side of the tracks in neighborhoods like East Point and Decatur, GA, environments that don't necessarily inspire happy-go-lucky "Whoomp! There It Is" lyrics. Instead tales abound about the droves of wannbe player shorties cruising in beat up hoopties, smoking bud and scoping the bodacious booties of the beautiful amazons that are as plentiful as peachtrees down that way.

THE SOURCE: What's your definition of a player?

DRE: A player is somebody who take care of they business in the game, the game of life. You gotta handle your business, come correct, get you a family, establish yourself, look after your money. It's about being respected.

BIG BOI: You ain't gotta drink and smoke out and pimp hos to be no player. You can be a regular, average everyday Joe and be a player as long as you handle your business the best way you know how. If you're true to yourself and true to what you're doing, then can't nobody ever call you out.

On your song "Get Up And Get Out," you say "women and hos get treated the same." So are all women really "hos and tricks" or is it deeper than that?

BIG BOI: I never said that. I said, "I learned the difference between a bitch and a lady, but I treated them all like hos." That's how I treated them. I learned the difference but the way I want to treat 'em is how I want to treat 'em. A bitch is someone who's always in my pocket, all up under my money clip. A lady is someone I respect and someone who respects me and what I'm doing, not always trying to come up after me or trying to see what I'm doing. Let me do my thang and I'll let you do yours.

So what's the differnce if you treat them both the same?

BIG BOI: Hell, it ain't really no difference to me, 'cause I'm a pimp! And that's how I see it. Even though I ain't here to degrade women, y'knowhutumsaying?

Atlanta in general is really coming up as far as hip-hop is concerned. Describe the local scene.

DRE: There's a lot of underground hip-hop groups around Atlanta, they just can't get noticed because you really got to get hooked up with the right people. About two years ago it was real hard, 'cause wasn't nobody down there, they didn't think it was nothing but booty shakers. But I feel that since we're doing something, we're letting other record companies know that it's people in Atlanta that can kick skills, and that's gonna bring more record companies to look for more groups down there.

What about neighborhoods like Decatur and the other places you mention in "Player's Ball?"

BIG BOI: East Point, GA, is country, it's quiet. And College Park is where you got the real hard players and hustlers and pool halls. It's really more advanced than East Point, but East Point is laying off into the cut. They gettin' into a little gang activity.

DRE: Decatur, GA, is full of drugs and dope dealers. You're surrounded by stuff like that.

What kept y'all from getting really caught up in that drug game and heading towards more positive shit?

BIG BOI: People gettin' killed, seeing our homeboys just get wiped off, just dying. Three or four of them this past year died right after we got signed. One of them was on "America's Most Wanted." He killed somebody, then he committed suicide and killed his girlfriend.

A lot of people are moving to Atlanta from New York and LA to slow down but it seems like things are moving just as fast there as anywhere else.

BIG BOI: 'Cause all them folks keep coming in, bringin' that shit back when we trying to lay it down a little bit. Don't bring that bullshit to our city. I'm telling you, get the fuck out of here with that shit! [*laughs*] Another attractive thing about Atlanta is the cost of living is way down, and we got the best lookin' women in the world, as you know. Freaknic, Magic City, Club Nikki's, all that.

The cool thing about your album is that the messages slip in and out. . .

BIG BOI: And that's how we do it. You gotta do it on the sly, because if you're straight preachin', they not gonna listen. So we give 'em a good time with it.

So what kind of political agenda is nessesary to present, as a rapper, so that people will listen?

BIG BOI: First of all, they need to stop all of that censorship bullshit, 'cause they really trying to cut us off. What we're trying to teach, they don't want it to be known. If they cut that off and let us do what we got to do, then it shouldn't be no problem. And they need to get some Black leaders up there, y'knowhutumsayin'? I'm lookin' for a Black president myself one day, before it all goes down.

What do you feel about the Congressional hearings on gangsta rap?

DRE: It's all crazy, you should be able to say what you want to say.

BIG BOI: They keep changing the Constitution. In a minute there ain't gonna be no Constitution and we gonna be living under martial law once again. It's gonna be all fucked up.

DRE: If they gonna do that, why they made that muthafucka in the first place? Why change it?

So what's real "Cadillac Music?"

DRE: That's what you bump in your ride. Cadillac Music is that Southern funk, with that 808.

BIG BOI: It's an edge of everything in there. '70s funk, because in the '70s they rolled Cadillacs, now they roll Benzes, Beamers and Lexuses, but Cadillac Music is for the trunk, really.

DRE: Ain't everybody got no Benz, most of the time you gonna find a nigga in a Cadillac, like on the down low, a poor, hustlin'-ass nigga.

Do you think a Cadillac rides better than one of these Benzes or Lexuses that everyone's trying to get?

BIG BOI: Hell nah! Never say that.

DRE: It's just what you can afford at the time.

I just thought some people might be into a smoother ride, instead of power and speed all the time.

DRE: Yep. That's what they into these days. Can't stop them damn kids.

CHEO H. COKER

STIR CRAZY

FREDDIE FOXXX

Freddie Foxxx might be hip-hop's most complete street soldier. He has paid dues on the corner as well as behind bars, so he knows a thing or two about how kids can get caught up in negativity. As a founder of Dream House—a Brooklyn-based program that offers the homeless a second chance—Freddie knows how to put his money where his mouth is. Perhaps most importantly, he has spent literally half of his life on the mic. By age 13, he had built a solid reputation around his way in Westbury, Long Island. Since then, he has lived through two record deals that would have left a less determined rapper at a dead end. But after hooking up with KRS-One on "Ruff Ruff" and Naughty By Nature on "Hot Potato," Latifah put Foxxx on Flavor Unit. Now, with his new album, *Crazy Like A Foxxx*, Mr. Resilience has another shot, and he's playing for keeps this time.

THE SOURCE: You've been pretty vocal in the whole debate over so-called gangsta rap. What do you think of people like C. Delores Tucker and Calvin Butts?

FREDDIE FOXXX: We've been let down by all our leaders that say, "Oh I marched with Martin Luther King, I used to be his bodyguard." Now it's to the point that most of them are like, "Damn, I've done all of this, I've gotten me a nice house down the block from the white boys and I can wear their clothes and wear their suits, I can golf with them and they've accepted me to some of their clubs." It seems like to me that they're separate from the people who they used to be. They used to be us!

Now it's like Black youth ain't going for the stuff they went for. We've learned that if you turn the other cheek, you get slapped on the other cheek. What happens now is [that they] don't want to back me, Snoop or any young rapper that's coming. It's another way of sayin', "You're doing it wrong." We've been hearing that since we was little kids. Actually, we're part of the mistakes that some of our parents made.

Do you think a lot of people are jumping on the gangsta band wagon?

As a matter of fact, the term "gangsta rap" is a label that was created by the media to actually break rap down section by section. So this so-called gangsta rap thing now is "If we can't destroy the music as a whole let's break it down and keep what we like." We even got rappers now who are real sell-outs and suckers who call themselves "positive rappers." Now if that ain't the biggest cocksucking move I ever seen in my life, I don't know what is, that's a fucking punk move.

I know you hope it sells, but what larger things do you want your album to accomplish?

People have been coming to me sayin', "Foxxx, I saw your video. Yo, it make me not wanna go to jail" or "It makes me feel like the time when I was locked up and I don't want to go back." I want it to have that kind of affect on everybody. I don't you just to buy it 'cause you know Freddy Foxxx can write good rhymes, I want you to buy it 'cause you know that Freddy Foxxx can be to you what Malcolm X was, morally, to a lot of Blacks. You know, he said things that made you feel good.

What would you look back on as your greatest learning experience?

Seeing people get killed. Seeing death. I've seen people die, man. And to me, it kinda make me feel like, you know, is this what it's all about. Being that it's a temporary life we live, I believe that, I just grasped this attitude about, this is all temporary, man. Do the best you could do while you're here and when it's your time, you just gotta go. I was out there doing the wild thing. I was out there just like everybody else was out there. A lot of people was out there. I learned social studies, math, English, science, everything in the streets. I learned everything in the streets.

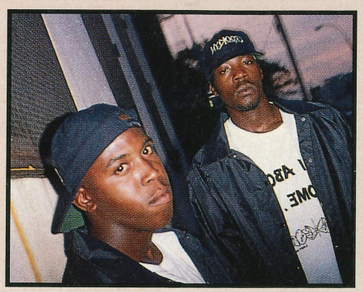
You were sayin' that right now it's not cool to be yourself.

It's not. It's like a lot of people are frontin'. They puttin' on this facade, man, that they something that they're not. A lot of groups talk about killin' and fightin', about how much they heart they got and how they representin' shit. Actually, they ain't representin' shit. They misrepresentin'. I believe that if you can't be yourself then you being a phony. And that is what a sell-out is. "Sell-out" ain't making pop records and sellin' a million records, a billion records. A sell-out is some who is outside of their character because they want to fit in. That's sellin' out.

JAMES BERNARD

DRAMA LORDS

M.O.P.



The air is mad thick in a club on the Lower East Side of NYC, as live-steppers and equally live females size each other up, oblivious to the DJ's effort to "move the crowd." But at the first down beat of "How About Some Hardcore," the debut single from M.O.P., the whole set is instantly electrified as every person in the club bumrushes the dancefloor and echos the song's lyrics as if it was his own personal anthem. All thru the East Coast and steadily spreading elsewhere, The Mash Out Posse from Brownsville, Brooklyn, are hittin' that street switch from the underground up. Unfaded by the TV cameraman that shadowed our cipher, M.O.P.'s Billy Danze, Lil' Fame, and manager/producer Lazy Laz described the method to the madness.

THE SOURCE: So, first off—how did y'all hook up and get into this rap game?

BILLY DANZE: Well, we grew up together, doin' stupidness as li'l kids. And we always rapped together. We even had a couple demos but we didn't shop them or nothing. They was for us. . . Matter fact, a lotta people around my area are just now startin' to catch on that I got a li'l skills and whatever.

FAME: When we was shorties, shit was rough, you know? You couldn't eat at night sometimes. But we thought we could do something so we wanted to use our talent to the fullest. In '92, I did three tracks on a compilation album called *The Hill That's Real*. I got my li'l underground props from there. And after that, I had a deal with 4th & B'way/Island, but we turnt it down. Cuz Mobb Deep was out and they wasn't doin' them right, so we just waited.

Now, my man Billy Danze had got caught up with the law, the streets had split us up. But in '93, he came home and we hooked up. We did "Hardcore" and that shit took off. Niggas was open to that shit. Everybody was like, "Y'all should be a group!" And since we was the essence of M.O.P., we entitled the album *To the Death*. That's the way we got the crew on there.

So M.O.P. is actually a whole crew that y'all two represent through your music?

LAZ: I'm a tell you a li'l bit about M.O.P. Back in the days, when Brooklyn had gangs, one of the gangs that was runnin' shit in the Brownsville, East New York area, was the Tomahawks. Well, that evolved into Fame's older brother—God bless the dead—Big Mal, and a lotta brothers on the Hill, and they became The Mash Out Posse. I think the reason why alotta gangs died out in Brooklyn is crack really started gettin' into the neighborhood. It was a lot more money out there and a lot of muthafuckers started cuttin' each others throats. But Mash Out Posse's one of the crews that stayed true to the game. They sorta stuck together.

So in you're lyrics you obviously reflect the history of your crew. . .

FAME: Yeah, we rap about things we been through, things we seen, things we know. But then again. . . you can't kill but so many muthafuckers when it comes to a rhyme, you know what I'm sayin'? Cuz after you kill all them muthafuckers, it's like, "Yo, where your skills at, nigga?" So we got to add to that with lyrical skills.

But still, the whole concept of the lyrics is murderous melodramas. Do y'all get pressure to "set a positive example"?

BILLY DANZE: Well, it's like this: people say positive is goin' to school and livin' the straight life. And you know, I don't see nothin' wrong with that. I would love to have went to school and lived a straight life. But I was dead broke. So what was I supposed to do? I wasn't gonna starve. I haven't lived positive, so I can't tell you nothin' too much about that. I think kids should go to school, I don't think kids should fuck with drugs and all of that, but I'm just tellin' you what I had to do, and what my man Fame had to do livin' up on the Hill.

FAME: And I feel highly respected for that because if anybody gotta feel my music, I want it to be the street people, straight up and down.

What do you feel about people assuming that hardcore rap is only West Coast gangster rap?

BILLY DANZE: To me, it don't matter what coast you on. If you have to strive to survive and you know what me and my nigga Fame is talkin' about, then we're writin' for you. Because anybody from the West can walk down my Hill as long as they don't start no shit. And I'ma walk thru the West as long as I don't start no shit, you know what I'm sayin'?

Do you find that there's a big difference between living in the street essence and dealing with the music industry?

BILLY DANZE: Naw, not at all. I still gotta watch everybody.

FAME: The rap game ain't no different from the crack game. You gotta hold your ground and you can't let a nigga chump you. You gotta get what's worth yours.

BILLY DANZE: But without using your hammer; by usin' your mind.

But did you ever get discouraged when you had to perform for three people in an empty club? Did you question whether you made the right choices?

BILLY DANZE: Actually, on the strength, it didn't matter, cuz we always been broke, so a deal ain't make a difference. Yeah, we could always use the dough, but what the fuck? Yeah, I would see a lot of wack-ass rappers, and I used to feel like when you were wack, you went platinum. But if that's the case, then I guess I can't go platinum, cuz I'ma stay real.

FAME: [*laughing*] Come on, son, maybe we need to just blow up and go make a "Pop That Coochie" record. . . No, fuck that!

MINYA OH

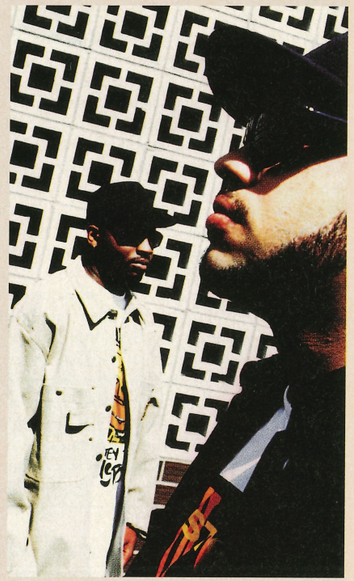
ROLL WITH THE CLAN

DFC

In 1991 Al Breed and T-Double E traveled the country as the Dope Flint Connection while on tour with their hometown partner MC Breed. Not only did their travels take them to every nook and cranny of hip-hop's underground, but along the way they managed to learn the ins and outs of the recording industry as well as making some valuable connections with a few of the biggest names in the gangsta rap circle. Now, after three years of patient dedication, Al and T have emerged with their own identity as Da Funk Clan. And if the surprising top five debut of their album (*Things In The Hood*) on *Billboard*'s R&B chart is any indication of their potential, it looks like their hard work has finally paid off.

THE SOURCE: Tell me about how the album was put together.

AL BREED: Well we started out in L.A. with Warren G. He did four songs for us then we came back down to Atlanta a did a couple of songs. Then we flew back out to LA to do some songs with DJ Slip and MC Eiht. It took a minute to do it all, but we wanted to make sure we had the right people.



Do you feel a little luckier than some other groups to have worked with such big names on your debut album?

AL: It was cool. They just let us know they had our backs if we wanted to do somethin'. It felt good but it made us even strive more. And by bein' in it, we learned that the rap game is just like the streets and we was ready for it. And they had our backs so we just handled our business.

How much help was it with Breed being your cousin as far as getting the boost to help you get started?

AL: It helped a lot for the simple fact that we got to experience all of the bad and all of the good [of the music industry]. So we didn't come into the music business trying to be money hungry, or just come in the business tryin' to fake the funk. We learned a lot and we knew what we had to do and handled it the best way possible. But with this being our first album, it was still a different experience and we didn't expect it.

What things occurred that you really didn't expect?

AL: Well we kind of got rushed into doin' the album.

T-DOUBLE E: We got rushed too fast 'cause we was writin' everything back to back. Like we would get the beat, and have to write the song for it the next morning.

So you would have liked to take more time writing the lyrics and everything?

AL: A lot more time as far as the whole thing. As far as having a beat and when we go into the studio just being able to straight up design stuff. We wanna work with it and be in more control of everything as far as the musical aspect of it.

What part did the D.O.C. play on your album?

AL: He looked out as far as helpin' us make sure that the things we wrote about weren't all just about one subject. He let us know a lot about it.

So he was like an overseer?

AL: Yeah, exactly. He made sure everything wasn't just about one point. He said every time you get a different beat, you write about what you feel from that beat.

What did you learn on the road with Breed?

AL: We realized this turns into a job. They get you out on the road and promise to have this ready and that ready, but *we* get out there and still have to hustle to make sure everything *is* ready. Like with Breed, his record company wasn't all that powerful and there was times before his first album jumped off where we was in every city straight up hungry. But we had to do promotions. And that's what we wanna do with our album. Just hit the streets.

J-MILL

THE $IX MILLION DOLLAR MAN

SOMEBODY PINCH KEN GRIFFEY JR. BECAUSE HE MUST BE DREAMING. AT 24 YEARS OLD, HE IS AMONG THE HIGHEST PAID ATHLETES IN PROFESSIONAL SPORTS, LOVES HIS JOB, LOVES HIS FAMILY AND IS JUST HAVING FUN.

BY CHRIS WILDER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BAYARD HORTON

Early in his sixth season as a big league baseball player, Ken Griffey Jr. is considered by some to be the best in the game right now. Playing centerfield for the Seattle Mariners, his defense is nothing short of outstanding and last year he hit 45 home runs, the second best in the majors. He shows promise and will be around for a while. He's played in four All-Star games yet he is younger than both of last year's rookies of the year.

At twenty-four years old he's a youngster, down with hip-hop and always asking questions about it. *"How many days has J-Dee been in jail now? I know it was 196 when y'all had it in the magazine. . . I'm waiting on* Helter Skelter. *When is that supposed to come out? . . . Who is this guy Masta Ace? I really like that 'Born to Roll' song."*

Growing up in Cincinnati, he listened to "mostly East Coast, New York stuff. My cousins in New York used to send me Red Alert tapes from, what is it KISS FM?" Now living in Seattle, most of the music he gets originates from the West. "I love it," he says. "Dr. Dre, Ice Cube, Hammer. . . Hammer got some good stuff. Sometimes you get an album and it'll be one good cut on it, but he got like ten or eleven songs that are nice."

In high school Griff admits not even knowing you could get drafted right away and spent much of his junior and senior years preparing for college—just so he could play baseball. One day he heard about someone that came straight into the majors from high school and asked his father, Ken Sr, about it. Senior, who was a player at the time, told him he should get ready for college, but if he wanted to play ball he was sure to get drafted. The two ended up on the same team and, during one month-long stretch in 1990, played together in the same lineup, the first father and son ever to do so. "That was great," Junior recalls. "I had a ball out there playing with my dad. But the best part was that he protected me for seventeen years. Now he's batting second and I'm batting third so I get a chance to protect him." There can't be a better way to end a long career than to be out there with your son.

Ken Jr. doesn't like to talk about racism in baseball but has experienced it going back to when he was a snot-nosed shorty. Once, back in the late '70s, during a game that the Yankees were losing, Billy Martin came into the clubhouse, where there were about ten players' kids, and singled out Junior's pop to say, "Get your damn kids outta here!" Ken and his younger brother Craig (we'll get back to him later) were the only Black kids there.

What's up with Whodini and them? Are they getting back together?

At the beginning of the '93 season, Junior signed a four-year, $24 million contract. That works out to $6 million a year. In case you wanted to compare that to your salary, his *weekly* paycheck would be right around $115,380. This is, of course, in addition to the six figures a year he's getting from Nike, who recently designed a cross training shoe for him that will hit the market in the Spring of '95. Not to mention whatever he gets from Nintendo which has created a Ken Griffey Jr. baseball game for Super NES.

With so much money comes as much pressure. He has to please management, the fans, his family and most of all himself. "Most of the guys that make what I make you'll see sitting around with $400 shirts on, $1000 pants, $1200 shoes," he laughs. "I dress like this all the time, T-shirt, jeans and gym shoes. That's me, that's how I feel comfortable."

His spring training home in Phoenix (don't get excited, it's just a rented apartment) with clothes, pictures, sneakers, videogames, Karl Kani boots, a dog cage, a Rottweiler puppy (the parents are at his real house in Washington) and newspapers spread around, looks more like a college dorm room than a married couple's rest. Yes, he is married.

He and Melissa met back in '89 when she asked him to dance in a club. They connected and have been ripping and running ever since, pausing only to get married about a year and a half ago. The consensus is that she is a better athlete than he is, regularly beating him in tennis, but the birth of their son, Trey Kenneth Griffey, last January may have slowed her down a little.

"I'm worried about my son," Junior admits. "There's a lot of crazy people out there, Melissa's been followed before and I don't want anybody messing with Trey." Ken knows that he is a public figure, but he's still heated about finding out his son's birth weight on the radio. "Somebody at the hospital couldn't *wait* to give out the information," he figures. And that makes him mad.

He still is happy as all hell that he has little Trey, the green-eyed bandit, and has enough sense to know not to pressure the boy into carrying out the family tradition. "He doesn't have to play baseball. I'm not going to make him pick up a bat, but if he wants to play he can play," says Ken. "He can do whatever he wants. If he wants to go to college and be a lawyer, he can do that. I'm going to support him as best I can."

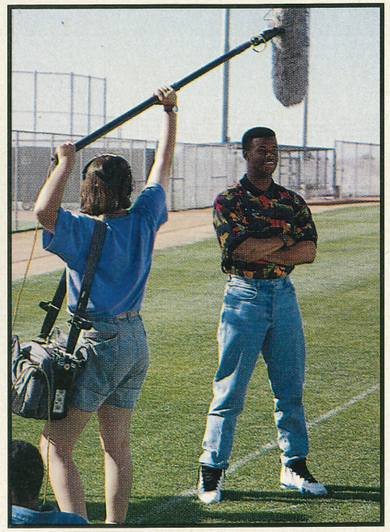
Do you remember Jibri? He's from Cincinnati, but I don't think he stays there anymore.

If you *know* him, Ken Griffey Jr. is, literally, the nicest guy in the world. If you *read* about him, Junior is a slacker who doesn't take the game seriously, he doesn't always try, he

THE $IX MILLION DOLLAR MAN

jokes around with opposing players and by far the worst of all the offenses, he sometimes wears his hat backwards. As often as the media praises Griff (and that's pretty often), they will dis him too. And that dissing is usually centered around the latest anti-Griffey quote from some upper management baseball exec.

During the '93 season Junior tied the record for consecutive games with a homerun at eight. Yet, on the day of the eighth homerun, that is after seven but before he had hit number eight, the New York Daily News ran a story about how Ken's goofing off during pregame warmups was getting out of hand and something needed to be done. This was accompanied by a picture of him laughing and throwing the ball, with his hat on backwards. Nowhere in the story did they mention the streak.



LEFT: JUNIOR SPORTS A HOMERUN STROKE AND HIS PANTS DOWN LOW TO HIDE HIS SOCKS.
RIGHT: HE APPEARS UNFAZED BY ALL THE MEDIA ATTENTION HE'S GOTTEN LATELY.

Press only sees the bad guy; the one who made an obscene gesture at Detroit Tiger manager Sparky Anderson after hitting a homerun. They don't see the guy who would ride around in the back seat of Melissa's Suburban, while she and Trey take the front, watch the NCAA basketball tournament with a writer from THE SOURCE on the TV that's mounted back there, and explain how nice he is in NBA Jam and that he wants to play in the next SOURCE "Madden Bowl." Or how he uses a 31 ounce bat, which is light, because the new theory in baseball is bat speed as opposed to power. Or how he wants to get pizza in New York, something he hasn't done in years. Or even that he believes that he is his grandmother's favorite because he's the oldest male of his siblings.

"I think that everyone's problem with me is that I smile," suggests Griffey. "I go out there to have fun. Everybody's fighting for the money, but I'm not out there for the money, I'm out there because I love baseball and I'm gonna have fun. There's no right and wrong with the media. If I don't smile then I'm an asshole and if I do smile, then I don't take the game serious. And that's not fair to me. I smile when I'm happy and I don't when I'm not happy. How Shaquille say it? I don't fake the funk."

Maybe they just don't like the way he wears his pants—long and tucked in right at the top of his cleats, so that you can't see any of his socks. That's how all the youngsters are wearing their uniforms and that might not sit well with the older traditionalists; probably the same crew that got mad when young basketball players started wearing big, baggy shorts. Still, he doesn't like to be fucked with. "I'm like everybody else," he says. "I have feelings. Just because we play sports doesn't mean that we can be criticized and it doesn't hurt. Some of that stuff does hurt."

BAYARD HORTON

Tupac ain't goin' to jail is he?

Once upon a time, Junior rapped on a record with Kid Sensation. No big deal. He calls Sensation his best friend. So when his best friend wanted batting lessons he said, "Sure! If you teach me how to rap." A few days later, they went down to the Kingdome, took some swings, came back to Sensation's house where he had beats and rhymes all arranged and got busy in the sound booth. Sensation is actually his neighbor, as is Sir Mix-A-Lot, who he goes bowling with.

Griff is cool with Hammer, too. They met back in '89 at a game in Oakland, kept in touch and have been down ever since. That would explain the frames around both license plates of Junior's Benz that read: IT'S ALL GOOD.

He also has love for Latifah. Holding a picture of the two of them at MTV's Rock & Jock Softball game, he explains how funny she was after missing a ball ("Shit! I usually make that play!") and her general down-to-earth demeanor. Then, $24 million and all, with the excitement of a child he said, "I asked her if I could be on her show and she said 'Just come down anytime.'" Anyone that's met her will verify that Latifah is cool peeps, but he's underestimating himself. Surely more shows than just "Living Single" would be glad to get him on.

Family Day. March 25th 1994. Okay, so four years ago Junior and Senior played together amid a whirlwind of media attention and the public's genuine interest. This day Junior took his spot in centerfield with his younger brother Craig, who plays in Seattle's farm system, at his side in left. The last time they had played together they were ten and twelve years old. There was no media fanfare, but the Griffey posse in the stands was more than enough moral support for the two. Naturally both parents were there, but also in effect was Melissa and Trey, Craig's wife and little cutie daughter, two of their boys from Cincinnati with their girlfriends, and an assortment of other Griffey associates. But perhaps most importantly, Ken and Craig's grandmother showed up. After she had already told the family that she wasn't going to fly down to see the game, Junior called her and asked her to come. She said yes, adding backbone to his belief that he's her favorite.

The support apparently paid off, because Ken turned in his usual stellar performance and Craig had two hits including a double, made a diving catch down the leftfield line and snagged a screaming line drive on a dead run at the warning track.

Brothers as dope as these two have to make you wonder why more *brothers* aren't playing the game. Junior sums it up in one word, "Access. A lot of inner city kids don't have access to baseball equipment, or a clean ballfield. If more athletes would donate $5,000 to clean up a field or buy some equipment for young kids, we'd see more Black kids playing the game at all levels."

The Negro Leagues of earlier this century certainly bred a lot of talent and kept the baseball tradition going in the Black community until Jackie Robinson finally broke the color barrier and joined a Major League team. Although players in the past didn't make the big money, the fact that Black people kept playing is the reason players like Griff can sign the contracts for presidents by the truckload. And giving back is just as important to him as Jackie Robinson's stepping onto the field for the Brooklyn Dodgers was to Blacks all over the World. Junior and Senior support the older guys through the Baseball Assistance Team [BAT] which gives financial support to any past or present player and their family that needs it. "They fought for what we have," says Ken, who along with his father, holds a charity golf tournament to raise money for BAT and children's hospitals. "And now it's our turn to fight for the next generation and also for the older guys too. If they didn't wear that uniform, I wouldn't be wearing mine."

I can't believe y'all put Barkley on the cover! Can I get the cover?

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LIFE AFTER

After a three year hiatus, KMD's new album *Black Bastards* finds a hardened, reflective Zev Love X still struggling with his brother's untimely death.

Zev Love X seems to be in low spirits. Dressed in black like a mourner, he sits in the dimly-lit conference room, waving a blunt and clouding the air. The smoke makes it hard to see him. His homie sips from an almost-empty 40 of Olde E. It's one in the afternoon. His label's offices are in the Time-Warner building; a mortuary, really, for uncompromising ghetto music. The offices are filled with white employees, vampires, creeps and other assorted ghouls blasting the label's newest grunge band. It's difficult to feel comfortable sitting in the belly of the corporate hydra which both censors hip-hop records and pimps it in their "upscale" hip-hop magazine.

Zev seems to have more on his mind than self promotion. His brother Subroc, the other member of KMD (Kausing Much Damage), was killed by a car just as the group's new album was completed. His features seem hardened, his face not as innocent as it was a mere three years ago. Gone are the striped shirts and wire-frame glasses seen in ads for the group's debut *Mr. Hood*. Instead, Zev affects the paramilitary fashion of the incoming generation's disenfranchised street soldiers.

"I can't fuck with all that image shit, being under-somebody's-coattails bullshit," he says today, as if to disavow his past. His frown tells me he was unhappy with aspects of how all parties involved were handling his career. Elektra, he implies, under-promoted *Mr. Hood* to ghetto audiences and marketed the group as Native Tonguers, constructing an image around the song "Peachfuzz" as opposed to "Nitty Gritty," which truly represented the group's philosophies. "Peachfuzz" was a puppy-love song; "Nitty Gritty" found them dissing all devils with their cohorts Brand Nubian.

"I feel a lot of things changed from our original idea as opposed to now, where we got to keep all the real shit," Zev says. "Our first time, we didn't even know how to fuck with it: shit fucking up, everybody getting in between this creative shit. . ." With *Black Bastards*, he says the group stuck to their guns and produced the music they were making before they were discovered by MC Serch in Long Beach, Long Island. This time, no values were compromised.

Inspired by Last Poet Gylan Kain's raw Afrocentric spoken jazz (Kain's *Blue Guerilla* album), *Black Bastards* is an intelligent response to a society where death is usually random, senseless and violent. At times Zev is a centrist, wavering between life affirmation and out-and-out nihilism. One song talks about hitting people with wine bottles ("Sweet Premium"); another boasts of a new .380 ("Get U Now"); two vignettes analyze love-hate relationships with lousy women ("Plumskinz"); one finds him embroiled in the battle over the word "nigga" ("What A Niggy Know"); "Smoking That Shit" and "Contact Blitt" both espouse the virtues of being hip-hop potheads (the former featuring Kurious Jorge, Lord Sear and Earthquake); while the title track isolates MC Parker Lewis and whites who use words like mackadocious. The album is a more powerful, more relevant work-focused, sophisticated and streetwise—without the crossover friendly abstractions. Listeners are instead provided with a street level analysis of a society gone mad. The world has changed and, with it, KMD.

DEATH

BY RONIN RO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CARL POSEY

LIFE AFTER DEATH

Zev exhales like a dragon, stoically answers questions, saying as little as possible, laughing to himself. He maintains a tight grip on his emotions.

"I wasn't even with him that day, but the shit was shady," he says of Subroc. "I don't know. I don't wanna get into details really." What he does say: on the fateful day, Zev was harassed by police officers in front of his home and taken into custody for an outstanding warrant from 1989. "For drinking a couple of beers, trying to take me in for some bullshit. So I'm locked up for four hours and didn't see him till the next day. I don't know. That's how it happened really."

"How did you find out?" I ask, recalling the November phone call I received about my brother Jay. "I felt it. I felt it definitely," he reflects. "I called my moms up right after that." I recognized his tone of voice—the numbness, the shock, the disbelief and ultimately, the acceptance that someone is gone forever. When my brother Jay's wife died of AIDS, leaving him with three children and a mind crammed with bittersweet memories, he began to drink heavily. His eyes were dull; he no longer gave a fuck about living. A year later, I stood by his closed casket. "Shit was real like that," Zev continues, oblivious to my thoughts. "I forgot who told me in words. I just knew."

Many KMD insiders insist that Zev is in a state of denial. "Zev used to be able to articulate his thoughts in such a clear way," one insider says. "But now he's sullen. Using beer and getting zooted as a crutch instead of facing things and trying to work it out."

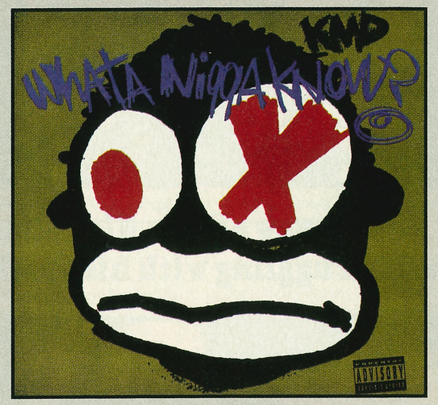
Death has cast a shadow on Zev, yet he pretends it hasn't. It has made him take a more realistic look at his life, the people in it and what he has to do with it. He realizes you only live once and have no time to please other people by being anyone other than yourself. This whole record shit he knows is temporary. At any minute, label executives can cut him off and send him back to relative obscurity (as they have done to so many others who have proved unprofitable).

"I don't know," Zev tells me. "Niggaz be passing away so much. The shit is crazy now. To tell you the truth, you just don't give a fuck no more. I mean, you give a fuck, you care about what goes on. . . but to a point where you now know that shit is real." It has always been real, I tell him.

I ask if listening to, and having to promote the *Black Bastards* album is a bother, if hearing Subroc's voice doesn't reopen painful wounds. He leans forward in his seat. His voice grows a little more forceful. "It seems like I'm listening to two different people, to tell you the truth. I'm not even that motherfucker from before. I don't know. Different times. What I'm doing now, creatively, is totally different. It's like him-and-me-combined-as-one type shit." His voice is tense, his answers stiff. I ask if he's uncomfortable talking about this.

"Nah, I never did before," he deflects. "Does it sound like I'm stuttering or something? Ask me anything. I wanna talk."

When he listens to the music, he remembers "the exact time" Sub approached him with new lyrics, when Sub would barge in and say, "Yo check this shit, it's butter, bust it, I'm'a flip it." His voice slides into what may be an accurate impersonation of Sub's enthusiastic tone. "When he was doing it for me," Zev monotones, his mind possibly filled with pictures of when they recorded home demos on a 4-track and an admittedly lousy Casio sampler. "I remember that shit just like yesterday," he continues, memories swimming through his eyes like fish. "It seems like one point in time, stuck there, can't change."



COON PERSECUTION: ZEV'S SAMBO FIGURE WAS SIMPLY BANNED LAST ALBUM (BELOW). THIS TIME, HE RETURNS LARGER, MORE OMINOUS AND WITH AN EYE JAMMIE.

Their mother is coping, Zev continues, nodding his head and considering her pain. "She went through crazy shit as well," he nods. "Word." There is a lull in the conversation, a prolonged silence speaking volumes. This is not the interview I want to be conducting. This is the last thing I need to be thinking about. Life is not going too hot these days.

"It's like this: the physical body is not us anyway," Zev continues, equating visiting a grave to "worshipping graven images." Subroc's presence is numinous, he tells me. "So the whole 'physical form' shit is mad wack." He pauses, toking on the blunt. He knows that Subroc will live on through the good deeds he did in life, through his music and in people's loving memories. But still the pain is deep. After a second, he stares into his lap, shakes a Newport out of his pack and says, "I feel like a fucking piece of bullshit." His face is a mask of torment. "Plus, smoking cigarettes? I know this ain't me. This can't be me for real."

"WHEN I'M GONE, EXPECT ME BACK TO HAUNT"

—Subroc, "It Sounded Like A Roc"

The death of a loved one brings unexpected emotions: guilt, anger, hate, sadness. Were we there when they needed us? Were we angry with the other when they died? Did we really treat them right? How could they leave us like this? While we question our own mortality we're forced to remember death is a natural part of life. Death is the one thing we *all* must inevitably face. Zev sits there, waiting for the next question. We shift gears.

Why *Black Bastards*?

"I did that on purpose," he says, "Bold title, bold statement. To make a mockery of this bullshit system of censorship." I ask about the song "Constipated Monkeys," about the sample from "Bellybutton Window," a posthumous Jimi Hendrix release. "Sub put that whole shit together," he says reverently. "That shit was flavor."

"What does the 'Garbage Day 3' instrumental represent?" I ask, admitting that it is my favorite track on the album.

"Whatever you hear or pick up out of that is mad short instances of big things," he answers. "That all just fills the whole gap of when people didn't see us or whatever." That explains the tenebrous bass, screams, racial epithets, gunshots and the lugubrious female voice that asks: "It's not the three of us anymore, is it?"

Zev says that the group KMD will endure "just as long as I can make records out this bitch" waving his hands at the corporate walls. His boy Grim Reaper, he foresees, will be joining. "Shit evolves like that, you kno'm saying," he says, accepting that life is a procession and you're supposed to move on. "Grim and me collaborate on a lot of joints. We're about to come out with some shit in the summertime. But that's really it. I'm just getting with him. After that, there'll be no more changes."

For now, Zev Love X will be at home working on new material and being a father to his two-year-old son. The child, he tells me with a mischievous grin, who brings joy to his life. "He's two," he says with a nod. "Yep, bad just like me too. It's mad fun being a parent," he continues, his mind off of death and dying, and on life. "Like being little all over again, getting to bug out, play all day." It's good to know he has something to make him happy. Death, after all, shouldn't run our lives.

gil scott-heron
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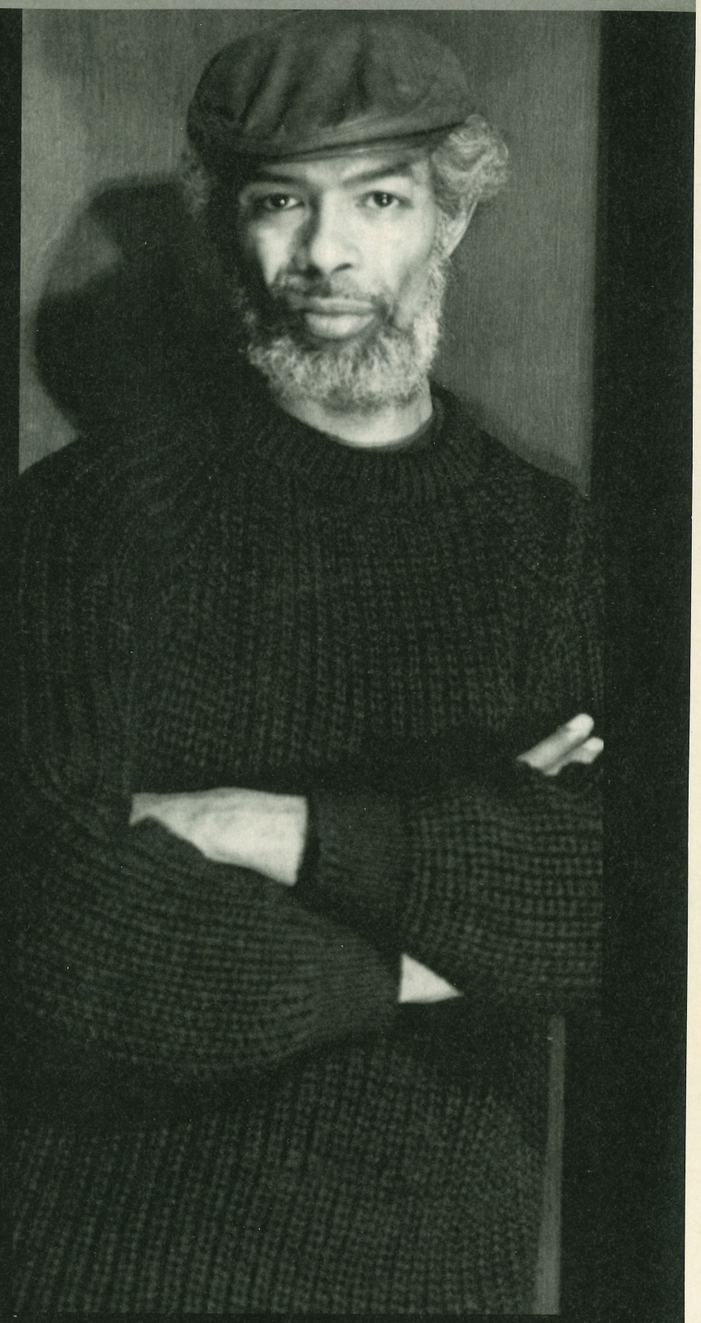
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VIDEO DAZE

FOUR DIE-HARD QUARTER WARRIORS REMEMBER THE CLASSIC, OLD SCHOOL VIDEO GAMES.

"QUICK, LOOSE BALL!" "GOT IT... AND SCORED!"

THE SUBWAY MAY BE crowded and noisy, but it doesn't break our concentration. We're banging away at a surprisingly well-maintained Mattel Electronics Basketball game—a relic from the first wave of hand-held computer toys. Unlike the color and complexity of what today's kids are hooked on, this is nothing more than a bunch of red electronic blips on a painted-on half-court. But guess what? It's just as fresh as the '94 shit, and it came out when the peanut farmer from Georgia was still president.

But this is just a prelude. We're riding the R train to Queens to check out a unique exhibit at the American Museum of the Moving Image. Old School video games—circa 1978 to 1984—collected and playable, are displayed in an exhibition called "Hot Circuits, A Video Arcade."

Coming down the block towards the museum was like a flash-back. Suddenly, we were all 12 years old again, rushing to Mark's Disco Pin Game Room after school to do battle on the small screen. Defender. Asteroids. Space Invaders. Pac Man. Donkey Kong. These are the games we were raised on—the machines we pumped quarter after quarter into until we ran out of lunch money.

As we jumped from game to game, running our fingers over familiar controls, natural instincts brought back 15-year-old skills. We were poppin' shit to each other and ready to back it up. So what if our girlfriends call us "nerds" when we get open on video games. This is the real deal—intense competition, blood-boiling pressure, precise timing and all-out excitement. Either you could hang or you were sent to the video graveyard.

So there we were—four of us, all 25-year-olds—reliving the early days of the video revolution. Some punk preteen might call these games prehistoric, but what the hell does he know? Sure, we like the new stuff too, but these are the foundation, the originators—like switching from the Black Moon album to a Cold Crush battle tape. That punk kid wasn't there, dropping quarters and playing his dues. We were.

BY JON SHECTER & CHRIS WILDER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DIRK WESTPHAL

ASTEROIDS (Atari, 1979)

You are a spaceship in a field of asteroids—the object is to shoot your way clear.

WILL: I remember they used to have nine machines in a row.
JON: That was the shit in the old days, when a game was hot, they'd have like ten in a row.
WILL: And everyone would be playin' em too. And you had to wait for one to open up.
CHRIS: Pac Man, Asteroids, Space Invaders.
JON: 'Cause at the time, they were so cutting-edge, it's the only thing people wanted to play. What's the first thing you liked about Asteroids?
WILL: It wasn't really 3-D, but it was good 2-D. And then Deluxe came around, oh it's color!
JERRY: The bubble, with the force field! Booooooop! [*laughter*]
JON: Like a pool ball. What about hunting for ships?
JERRY: Oh yeah!
WILL: The little ones would keep comin' out.
JERRY: Thousand dollars! [*laughter*]
CHRIS: When you die on that, your ship would just break into *sticks*. [*mass laughter*]
JERRY: And it was fucked up too, 'cause wherever you'd die, you had to like see where you were, 'cause a rock would come and hit you.
CHRIS: Yeah, yeah, you would die, you'd come back and there'd be a lot of shit around you, and you'd get fucked up right away.
WILL: It tried to give you a good situation, but every once in a while. . .
CHRIS: It would wait. . .
WILL: And that was one of those games where you could play forever. It wasn't like Pac Man, you could play Asteroids for like 14 hours.
JON: Ships lined up across the screen, quarters lined up across the top.

ATARI FOOTBALL (1978)

A tabletop pigskin adaptation where players move Xs and Os with trackballs.

CHRIS: Marc Wilson! Marc Wilson!
WILL: Blue 32, Blue 32. He would just stand there and just hit the thing, and he had the same play.
CHRIS: You don't remember Marc Wilson—he was the backup, but whoever got hurt for the Raiders, Marc Wilson stepped up one season. And that had to be '78 because this nigga used to be in the arcade, "Marc Wilson! Marc Wilson!"
JON: Who else agrees this is the best video game of all time? It was the first football game, and it's the only game where physical exertion comes into play. The harder you rolled the ball, the faster you went.
WILL: At the time, I thought rollerball would take over everything—it was that good.
JON: I ran my finger over the ball, the ball is so stiff, man.
CHRIS: It's so heavy!
WILL: I remember we used to get blisters on our hands. . . I agree it's the best, but I wouldn't know until we played it more. Remember that dude, he could outrun the computer on that game! He had a way to run—like quick, diagonal bursts up the field. He had big fat hands, his name was Bobby. And he worked at Supercade for a long time after that.

BERZERK (Stern, 1980)

You control a man with a laser gun as he walks around a primitive maze and kills robots.

WILL: That was the transition where it was OK to kill people on video games.
JON: Remember Evil Otto? [*reading*] The chip taunts players with [*robotic voice*] "Chicken, fight like a robot," and. . .
CHRIS: . . . "Coin detected in pocket!" When you die, you're about to walk away, it said that shit.

CENTIPEDE (Atari, 1981)

A series of centipedes come speeding down the screen, as you attempt to destroy them or get out of the way.

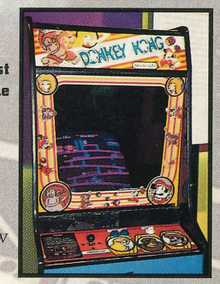
WILL: I'm gonna be honest, I never liked Centipede.
CHRIS: I liked it, I fucked with it.
JON: The best thing about it was the way you could fire real fast.
CHRIS: Hell yeah, and the trackball was quick, that game was real fast.
JERRY: If you just roll a little bit, it would move a lot.

DEFENDER (Williams, 1980)

You are a spaceship flying low over a planet surface—using numerous controls, you must kill aliens and save humans.

JON: A classic.
WILL: I liked Defender, but I thought Stargate [the sequel] was better. It was more action and the time warp and stuff.
JON: Defender is a classic, 'cause it's a complete fantasy, and there's a lot of shit you have to do! Think about it: aliens come to a planet and pick people up, and they get to the top, and they'd turn into angry mutants.
JERRY: Rrrrrrrrrr!
WILL: And you'd have to be careful not to go into space!
CHRIS: The screen would get real black, everything would explode!
JERRY: Oh shit!
JON: Yeah, all your men got killed.
WILL: Remember in Stargate, if you got five flags, you went five levels or something when you went through the gate with them.
JON: True. You thought those were flags? I always thought those were people.
JERRY: No, they're people, but people call them flags.
JON: Defender had dope sound too.
WILL: It made a crackling sound when you fired. And there was that silence at the end of each round. It was like, "Oooooh!"

DONKEY KONG (Nintendo, 1981)



You are a hard-hat named Mario who must climb a series of construction sites to save the damsel in distress who has been captured by a giant monkey armed with barrels.

JON: I have a clue: How high can you get?
WILL: What?
CHRIS: Donkey Kong.
JON: That's what it used to say: 25 M—HOW HIGH CAN YOU GET?
JERRY: That was the original Mario game.
JON: [*reading*] As for the game's name, some people say donkey is taken from the Japanese word for stupid, and of course donkey means something like that in English. Others say the original name was Monkey Kong and that a misspelling during production was discovered only after thousands of units had been shipped.
CHRIS: I'm sayin', it's a monkey!
JERRY: It's a typo. . .
CHRIS: Part of our lives are based on that typo! Donkey Kong's a big thing!
JON: That game is good though! Donkey Kong held its own, it held its own in '94!
CHRIS: All the games now, like Sonic The Hedgehog, there's a whole bunch of games just based on that.
JERRY: What was the game. . . it was a little guy with a safari hat on.
WILL: Not Jungle Hunt?
JERRY: Oh no, that was where he goes underwater. With the bubbles!
CHRIS: The vines! The vines! That was the shit!
WILL: And the little Indian guy!
JERRY: And the girl be in a pot like this!
JON: You had to breathe and you had to go to the top 'cause your breath

VIDEO DAZE

would run out when you're stabbin' the crocodiles!
CHRIS: Oh yeah! You had a dagger. [*laughter*] You were killin' crocodiles with a dagger.
WILL: Yo, how many games were like, save the girl? Mario Brothers, Donkey Kong, Jungle Hunt.

DRAGON'S LAIR
(Cinematronics, 1983)

You lead a knight through various hazards in a world created by laser-disk technology.

JON: I don't really want to talk about this.
JERRY: But you gotta mention it, though, 'cause that was a breakthrough game.
CHRIS: What game?
JERRY: Dragon's Lair. The game that fuckin' everybody used to stand around and watch somebody put like eight dollars into it.
JON: And you got as much entertainment for zero as they got. 'Cause all you do is hit a button, there's no action.
WILL: Remembering a pattern.
CHRIS: I don't know what you're talking about.
WILL: It looked like a real cartoon. There was like a knight with a sword, and there was one room where you'd light up the floor.
JERRY: And then they came with Space Ace, the other game.
WILL: Space Ace! That was the new one, the other laser game. Let's watch someone else waste their money.

PAC MAN/MS. PAC MAN
(Bally/Midway, 1980, 1982)

A yellow character eats dots as he/she is chased around a series of mazes by four ghosts.

WILL: Lotta discussion on that.
JERRY: The original.
WILL: The craziest thing about Pac Man was how it started the whole, like, industry hype of video games. Lots of people bought books on how to play Pac Man, it was crazy.
JON: Yeah, the song.

CHRIS: I remember specifically newspaper stories about yuppies, businessmen at their lunch hour, at the arcade playing Pac Man.
WILL: Plus, they had all the merchandise—stickers, hats, T-shirts.
CHRIS: And the cartoon.
WILL: This says it all [*holds up a can of food*]. No other video game has reached this level. I had some today.
CHRIS: PAC MAN PASTA IN SPAGHETTI SAUCE WITH MINI MEATBALLS! [*wild laughter*] In '94. And he has it! He eats it!
WILL: It's good, it's very good!
CHRIS: Pac Man spawned Ms. Pac Man, which...
JON: Why is Ms. Pac Man so fuckin' popular?
CHRIS: Graphics were a little bit better, and there was the same bad guys Inky, Blinky, Pinky and Clyde...
JON: 'Cause Pac Man had a baby?
CHRIS: Oh, in the skit? Ms. Pac Man became like a Black thing. And you're hard pressed to find a Black person that didn't at least know a pattern for the first two screens. Black people played that, I don't know why. Like everybody played it, guys and girls.
WILL: I played it on Atari 2600 the other day.
JERRY: Oh my god!
WILL: But they didn't have Combat, they didn't have any of the good games.
JERRY: How 'bout basketball with the fuckin' hoop that goes like this [*makes a T shape*].
CHRIS: Remember that store on Chestnut Street that used to sell Atari shit?
JON: Early Atari shit! Yo, the day that Asteroids came out, I didn't go to school, I just went there and bought Asteroids. That was a big fuckin' day!
WILL: And I came over to your house right the fuck after school to play that shit!

SPACE INVADERS (Bally/Midway, 1978)

Moving side-to-side, the object is to eliminate the invading aliens as they move towards the bottom in formation.

JON: Another legendary classic.
CHRIS: That was one of the first, you knowhamsayin'? Remember the blockers in front of you that would get shot out?
JON: Can you hunt for ships in Space Invaders too?
WILL: You could. Here's how: you left nine guys, three rows of three, and then they came down, and that was the perfect...
CHRIS: When you would shoot down to two guys, they came down fast, like eh-eh-eh-eh-eh-eh... Get on the side, and catch 'em comin' down.
JON: We played Space Invaders, and it doesn't hold up.
WILL: It doesn't.
JON: It's too boring.
WILL: Remember how there was a column of them, and if you hit the lowest guys last, you got like 10,000 points.
JERRY: Every little thing, every glitch of that game—I know exactly what you're talking about.
WILL: That's the way to make your quarters last. S

Catch "Hot Circuits" at the Museum of Science and Industry in Tampa, Florida, from May 13 to October 2.

BEAT THIS

In 1979, what was the quickest way to be the man in the fad-conscious grade school set? Come to school with the latest hand-held game and show your skills. Compared with present-day hand-helds like Sega's full-color Game Gear, the original games featured red LED blips and straightforward controls. But in 1979, when the phrase "information superhighway" was science fiction, little red blips were some fly-ass shit.

As soon as kids saw the first one that hit the shelves in force, Mattel Electronics Auto Racing, demand for these games went outta control. Football, in both its original form and the advanced model, probably saw the most adolescent action. (When Coleco dropped the head-to-head joint, it was over.) And you couldn't beat basketball, where you had 24 seconds to score *as many* points as possible.

To those who questioned why you were (are) spending so much time plugged into your little electronic gadgets, a final note of revenge. Some of these games, which originally sold for $30 and under, are now fetching as much as $300 in mint condition. Now that's what I call progress. **JS**

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CAUGHT UP IN THE (GANGSTA) RAPTURE

DR. C. DELORES TUCKER'S CRUSADE AGAINST "GANGSTA RAP"

"YOU GOT THE OLDER GENERATION OF SO-CALLED LEADERS WANT TO COME TALK TO US, WANT TO SIT DOWN AND RAP TO US. BUT IT'S NO DIALOUGE THERE. THEY ALWAYS LET THE SMALL THINGS OR SMALL DIFFERENCES INTERFERE WITH THE BIGGER PICTURE. IF I USE THE WORD 'BITCH,' TO ME IT'S JUST LANGUAGE."

ICE CUBE, FROM A RECENT NY TIMES INTERVIEW

I think she called me "baby," or something like that. Maybe "sweetheart." Whatever the case, it was clear to me as soon as she opened her mouth that this would be a difficult interview. To be a journalist is one thing, to confront and challenge a 60-some-odd-year-old Black woman is another. So, as convicted as I was about calling her anti-"gangsta rap" rhetoric to task, I dutifully reminded myself that she could have been my grandmother. And really, I had to admit that I agreed with a lot of what she says. This music *is* often painfully violent and misogynist—there is no denying that. It definitely legitimates, and probably enhances violent and misogynist action—there's little denying that either. So why does her anti-"gangsta rap" mission put such a bad taste in my mouth?

Dr. C. Delores Tucker fancies herself a type of modern-day Moses—one who will lead her people to liberation, freeing them finally and for good from the hell of "gangsta rap" and the wrath of it's oppressive craftsmen. She is offended and incensed and claims she would rather die before she would sit idly by and continue to let "the children's" ears meet with such "pornographic smut."

She is crusading against *it*, this horrific, monsterous thing—making public appearances, marching, picketing, getting arrested and crying. She says she won't stop until *it* stops. And ever since her concerted efforts began some year and a half ago, there has been a multi-faceted assault on "gangsta rap" never before seen on any other type of artistic musical expression. No, not even Tipper Gore's (vice-president Al Gore's wife) 1985 raid against violent heavy metal will match this all-out attack. Tipper and her organization, the Parents Music Resource Center won partial compliance from record companies who have agreed to voluntarily stamp their morally questionable music (anything with curses) "parental advisory: explicit lyrics." But with hard rock as its primary target, Tipper's campaign didn't speak directly to Black America (with the exception of her notorious-but-brief bout with Luther Campbell).

Black folks are listening now.

It was a psychic friend and a famous welfare recipient that set it off.

Of all people, Dionne Warwick and Melba Moore were the "young entertainers" who first alerted Tucker to so called "gangsta rap's" undeniably brutal lyrics. It was at a brunch held during the annual Congressional Black Caucus weekend. "Those young women said they were tired of being disrespected and insulted," Tucker says. The two artists now co-chair the entertainment commission of Tucker's organization, The National Political Congress of Black Women.

The NPCBW is a non-profit, non-partisan organization for "the political and economic empowerment of African American women and their families." It is this crew—one comprised of socially stalwart, scholarly, super-well-to-do divas—that is putting a match to the kerosene of the (anti-) gangsta rap debate. Led by Dr. Tucker, these women have been successful in galvanizing not only the mainstream media but the Black church, the NAACP, United States Congress and a host of other groups and individuals to take up their struggle.

And a well-publicized struggle it is. You may have seen Dr. Tucker on the Geraldo circus—the CNBC special on "gangsta rap" featuring, Schoolly D, Ed Lover and Dr. Dre, Freddie Foxxx, Luther Campbell and Joseph Madison of the NAACP. Or maybe you've seen her gracing a page or two of your local newspaper. Or perhaps, you've even caught a glimpse of her downtown at the precinct (she's been arrested for protesting, you know). Nowadays, Dr. Tucker is everywhere. The former Pennslyvania Secretary of State is a very powerful woman. She knows struggle and she understands government. Although it will be a fight (after all, rap made an estimated $1.4 billion last year and you can bet of that, "gangsta rap" represents a nice portion), she's up for it. Dr. Tucker picks up where Rev. Calvin Butts left off. She wants to stop the "gangsta rap" insanity, and there's a good chance she will. *Everyone* is officially listening now; no matter how you see it, the stakes are high.

Eleven flights up, Dr. Tucker is sitting high and mighty on the latest official anti-gangsta rap throne. It must be because the central office of the NPCBW is located at the new Kennedy Center in Washington DC that oil paintings of lillies, (or was it cherry blossoms?), decorate the waiting area walls, and a huge brass eagle is permanently perched on a stand. That's also probably why opera is playing lightly. I suppose it's because of these classic things much adored by "Americans" that on first sight, I really can't tell that this office has much to do with women *or* Blacks. But it does. Ah yes, a better look around reveals ten *Jet* magazines spread out neatly on a coffee table.

Back in Dr. Tucker's personal office space though, spatterings of Black womanhood are immediately evident. There's the Rosa Parks water color, the Sojourner Truth iron sculpture and Dr. Tucker's many plaques and awards. There's also the photo of Dr. Martin Luther King and Dr. Tucker marching somewhere, arm-in-arm. "See that?" she points to the picture. "I didn't have to do that. I've been fighting for a very long time."

Although some of us will, it's a little scary that Dr. Tucker would assume that Snoop Doggy Dogg, or me for that matter, cares that she marched with King. I didn't have the heart to tell her that for a generation of Black and poor, and Black and not-so-poor young people, Dr. King has become less than a hero, role-model or intrepid warrior but instead, more of an intangible icon that every February, McDonald's insists we remember. It wasn't in me to say that for too many Black kids there is no historical connection to that place in time—that sadly, the political and economic "gains" of the '60s civil rights movement have backfired against our community in many injurious ways.

At this very moment, the gap between the generations in Black America is as wide as the Sahara. "Kids have it better today," she tells me.

Really?

JIM WELLS

DR. TUCKER TESTIFIES AT THE CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS RECENTLY

DR. TUCKER: I didn't call the Senate hearings for them [the gangsta rappers]. Let me explain what I did. I called for these hearings against racism and greed, pure and simple. They [the music industry] can stop it. They don't do it to their own. They won't let it be sold to Jews. They won't let it be sold to white kids, only to Black kids.

THE SOURCE: But for us to take matters to Congress or any arm of the American government seems pointless considering, historically speaking, they have never acted in our best interest.

Because they have never been forced to. When they were forced to, they did! They did act in our best interest when Rosa Parks sat in the back of the bus, we don't have to sit there anymore. How do you think we came to where we are if they didn't ever do anything?

A lot of young Black people today would rather have their own bus and not have to ask anything of anyone.

To be a journalist is one thing, to confront and challenge a 60-some-odd-year-old Black woman is another.

If we want to, we ought to have the right to promote the best in us. We did not just "sit with them." We promoted our greatness to our children. That little two-year-old girl who said she wanted to be an m.f. gangsta. . .

What are somethings that have been done before now to correct the conditions facing young Black people? This attack on music just all seems like a very late reaction to one of the many things that merely mirrors our pathology, not creates it.

Well, nobody seemed to be doing anything until I went to jail and took up this issue, had a press conference. Why now? Why wasn't it raised before? Since nobody else raised it, I did when the entertainment women came here. So after I raise the issue, of course, there is a lot of money flowing. I could take money. People want to know what I want. I could get fifteen or so million. What do I want? I want dignity and justice and a quality life for my people. That's what I've always wanted. I don't get paid. I'm not on anybody's payroll.

Do you think that the absence of a quality life for Black people started with gangsta rap?

We have never had a phenomenon where kids were planning there own funerals at thirteen and twelve. We never had that. I am going after the record industry because they are the ones that are out of control. There's the Nation of Islam in the 'hood. They honor their

BY KIERNA MAYO DAWSEY

C. DELORES TUCKER, CENTER, AND DIONNE WARWICK, RIGHT:
USING THEIR CLOUT IN WASHINGTON TO SILENCE GANGSTA RAPPERS

CAUGHT UP IN THE GANGSTA RAPTURE

mothers and don't drink or use drugs. Let them get a contract, they could sing as good or better as anyone, but they never will get a contract. Never! Lena Horne couldn't get a decent contract because they said you have to play these roles and she refused. She would not promote the racist stereotypical images that they wanted her to play. So what's new? Nothing. They (gangsta rappers) are just the new Step n' Fetchits. Someone said Amos and Andy of the 1990's. We can't say that they are just speaking of reality. The reality is that they don't hate their own people; they are paid to say that. So many of them have said that it's the money. *The money.*

Conspiracy theories about the record industry weave in and out of Dr. Tucker's argument. "When these white kids see the Blacks they think, 'Oh, that's Black. That's the way they live. That's the way they are.' What [record companies] are doing is programming them to say that we are not people and when the man comes to exterminate us and put us in concentration camps, the white kids are going to be happy about it," she explains. She believes that "someone" is in the process of building concentration camps for Blacks, "there's one already in New Orleans," she confirms. She is convinced that this music sends a message to the entire world that Black people are sub-human.

But for such radical concerns, her response is rather weak. Dr. Tucker is a woman who actually believes that use of the vote alone will change the concentration camp reality. And it is this type of impossible reasoning that is really the tell-tale problem with Tucker's philosophy around "gangsta rap." Not that "gangsta rap" isn't problematic with it's repeatedly self-hating, anti-life themes. Not that the recording industry isn't making googobs of cash by exploiting those who exploit the worst of Black people's conditions. Not even that a good slice of the "gangsta rap" pie isn't comprised of minimum-talent, fake-gangsta wannabe's who get over on their fans *and* The Box by flashing '64 Impalas and big booty girls in three minute videos. All of this, of course, is true.

Tucker's major flaw is in her fundamental belief that "gangsta rap" is a cause and not an effect: The cause of violence and misogyny in Black communities, not the effect of these two proudly Amercian social ills. The cause of Black exploitation by the music industry, not the result of a long history of white exploitation of trusting Black talent. The cause of sub-standard, low-grade product, not the result of a capitalist system infamously known for encouraging cheap product "get overs."

Nonetheless, the fears and concerns of Dr. Tucker are very widely shared. The conspiracies she refers to could more simply be called white supremacy (racism), as it plagues every American institution. She doesn't know that countless panels and discussions and fights have transpired for years between young people (both in and out of the music industry) trying to make a little sense out of what is too often sheer madness. Heated sessions take place between Black women and girls (who listen to and love this music) as they defend themselves against the same hateful threats and images that Black females have always had to fight. Nasty editorials challenging rap artists to check themselves are written.

Still, in order to be respected in the hip-hop critique arena, *at the very least* you must possess a genuine love for the artists, the audience and *some* appreciation of the art form itself. Anything else is like a car mechanic trying to appraise a diamond.

When the Congressional hearings took place two months ago, Congresswoman Maxine Waters was the only public official to openly support the rappers and their right to simply be. Her testimony gave voice to a unique position—one that saw "gangsta rappers" as part of the community, not immoral aliens who had dropped out of the sky.

"These are my children," she said. "I do not intend to marginalize them or demean them. Rather I take responsibility for trying to understand what they are saying. I want to embrace them and transform them. . . I don't encourage the use of obscenities. I just think we should stop pretending we are hearing them for the first time. . . Let's not lose sight of what the real problem is. It is not the words being used. It is the reality they are rapping about. For decades, many of us have talked about the lives and the hopes of our people—the pain and the hope-

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CAUGHT UP IN THE GANGSTA RAPTURE

lessness, the deprivation and destruction. Rap music is communicating that reality in a way we never have."

Waters is involving rappers in a project called "L.A. 17 to 30" that will try to help young people between 17 and 30-years-old in Los Angeles "clean up their acts and reenter the mainstream." For this project to work it will cost $17 million. Much of that will come from the entertainment industry.

The major voice of reason in the Tucker camp comes from Von Alexander, the New York-based director of the entertainment commission of the NCPBW. She has be an active member of the music industry for 17 years. She is also a community activist and really tries to keep her finger on the pulse of young people's concerns. Von contends that years before taking anything to Dr. Tucker and subsequently congress, (in fact, before going public at all) her office printed up thousands of letters urging men in the industry to take a stand against what was happening in hip-hop. "It began after the Dee Barnes incident," she says. "But there was virtual silence. And know that we didn't just respond to this. When the *Color Purple* came out, we jumped up and said, 'No, Steven Spielberg, you can't talk about our men like that.' But when women are attacked, brothers sit back and let it happen."

Von is well-aware that throughout the music industry Dr. Tucker does not win Most Popular, but has not fear of that thwarting their objective. "If Dr. Tucker's boisterous and righteous mouth will bring about dialogue, then I welcome her conversation. Finally brothers and sisters are having the talk that we should have been having in the first place. Dr. Tucker has brought the conversation back to the place where it should have been all the time."

Since it is Von that generally ends up communicating her organization's concerns to key players in the music industry, she is forced to listen to everyone. She knows that there are women who share her concerns but are conflicted by the conservative and unwavering politics Dr. Tucker has brought to the debate. "That's alright," she says. "We can agree to disagree and still be on the same team." No matter what, Von stands firmly by her mentor. "All these people claiming that Dr. Tucker isn't out in the streets don't know what they are talking about. Besides, they aren't out here themselves. People don't put their money where their mouth is. Dr. Tucker does. She walks the streets, she believes in rights for Black women. I wouldn't have the courage to do much of what I do if it weren't for her example."

CONGRESSWOMAN MAXINE WATERS TAKES A SUPPORTIVE POSITION

As we go back and forth, Dr. Tucker makes it clear to me that she is not about to define "gangsta rap." "You know exactly what it is," she says. But honestly I don't. In fact, I'm slightly afraid that she could be working this diligently to win legislation to *silence* all rap with, yes, cursing. So away with everybody, even Queen Latifah. You know, the gangsta rapper.

But the truth is because no "genre" of rap music has ever been self-conscious enough to actually name itself, it's obvious the term is one that was imposed from outside the rap community. Many "gangsta rappers" themselves reject the term. Because Dr. Tucker refuses to respectfully enter into any dialogue with members of the hip-hop community (see the same Geraldo circus where she actually spent time telling Ed Lover she didn't want kids to end up like *him*), she finds herself working with definitons created more by Dan Rathers and Peter Jennings than Scarface and MC Eiht. But, OK, supposing we agree there's such a thing as "gangsta rap," shouldn't we be clear about whether it is the rap performed by gang members specifically, by everyone from LA in general, Kool G Rap, Bushwick Bill or what about Luke? He *did* appear on the special.

It's obvious "gangsta rap," at least as far as its biggest detractors have determined, is any "negative" rap, (read: not upholding the imagery of successful, refined, happy, proud-to-be-Black blacks). In actuality, the only people who could possibly determine what gangsta rap is, *if* it is, are the Black people who make it and the Black people who listen to it. But since most of us haven't been asked what we think, it's not surprising that the term is used quite loosely, even ridiculously, by everyone—preachers and protestors alike. This is too bad. Isn't semantics, language, the crux of this entire debate?

It is an understatement to say that the words are vile. Harsh. Offensive. But even more devastating are the realities to which the words speak. Author and critic Nelson George writes, "To discuss this subset of rap outside the framework of the forces that influence it. . . is to rip this music out of context and endow its creators with a profound power that I don't believe they have."

Is it possible to recognize the pathology and potential danger of some rap music and still enjoy aspects of it? For millions of us, there is no question. Rap music, like the generation that gave birth to it, is schizophrenic and takes on the different faces and attitudes of its many players. Too much has been said about our so-called "lost generation" by every one except us. That is one of the major dangers of eradicating "gangsta rap"—it would silence an extremely important voice. Without it, who will (accurately) report about the nuances, pathology and most importantly, resilence of America's best kept secret? The Black ghetto.

Go ahead and lump "gangsta rap" in the group of things that divides Black America. As the ties that bind the different socio-economic classes of Black people continue to fracture, so will the link between our sensibilities and concerns. It's been three long decades since the sixties. No longer are all of our eyes are on the same prize. Author and professor Michael Eric Dyson wrote that, "Gangsta rap's greatest sin is that it tells the truth about practices and beliefs that rappers hold in common with the black elite. This music has embarrassed black bourgeois culture."

"Gangsta rap" really has no shame. The "why?" is obvious. This music makes far too much money at a time when *56%*, more than half of Black America's children are born into poverty. We are going to need a whole lot more than a "just say no to 'gangsta rap.'" Legislation won't put a dent in white supremacy. Who wouldn't love for our music to reflect a better reality? For our men to love our women? For our men and women to love themselves? But right now, the reality is that "positive" means nothing to a whole lot of people.

More people than Dr. C. Delores Tucker cares to know. S

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REALITY CHECK

FACED WITH THE COLLECTIVE FURY OF PARENTS, PREACHERS AND POLITICIANS, THE RAPPERS LABELED "GANGSTA" HAVE A COMMON ANTHEM: NO SURRENDER

"'CAUSE THE BOYZ IN THE 'HOOD ARE ALWAYS HARD/YOU COME TALKIN' THAT TRASH, WE'LL PULL YOUR CARD/KNOWING NOTHIN' IN LIFE BUT TO BE LEGIT/DON'T QUOTE ME, BOY, 'CAUSE I AIN'T SAID SHIT"

When Ice Cube committed these words to paper eight years ago in a song for his friend Eazy E, could he have imagined how completely those same boyz in the 'hood would later captivate the country? Probably not. At the time, he didn't even think that anyone outside of the Los Angeles area would be interested in his tales of slanging and gangbanging, all centered around Compton, an unremarkable southern California town which boasts exactly one building of any notable height: the courthouse.

Cube soon discovered he was wrong. Plenty of people in and out of LA were more than interested in hearing about his 'hood. They snapped up enough copies of *Eazy-Duz-It* and *Straight Outta Compton* to send Cube, Eazy, Ren, Dre and Yella into the platinum stratosphere. N.W.A wasn't hip-hop's first violent heroes—we already had Schoolly D, BDP and Ice T dropping bodies on wax—but the gangstas in black upped the ante. Not only did Dre's production engulf and overwhelm us, but Cube, Ren and Eazy's searing lyrics dragged us onto their turf, defining and giving voice to an entire worldview. They told us how a gangsta dresses, what a gangsta drinks, what he smokes, how he deals with his enemies, what kinds of guns a gangsta favors, how he (mis)treats his women, what cars he likes, what his sound system should sound like, how a gangsta shows love for his homies, how much a gangsta loves money, how a gangsta feels about his family, his school and the police that patrol his neighborhood. Somebody coined the phrase "gangsta rap" and it stuck.

By the time Snoop Doggy Dogg became a household name, the gangsta onslaught had roped and hog-tied the public imagination. No longer a fringe element, gangsta rap is now mainstream. Even after N.W.A splintered, its former members continue to collect gold and platinum awards (Where's Yella? Well, four out of five ain't bad). R&B groups are dressing like them. It seems like every up-and-coming rapper has to come equipped with either a Glock or a fat sack of good weed—or both. And how many new Lexuses are on the streets of Hollywood thanks to all the movies featuring gangsta rap themes or gangsta rappers?

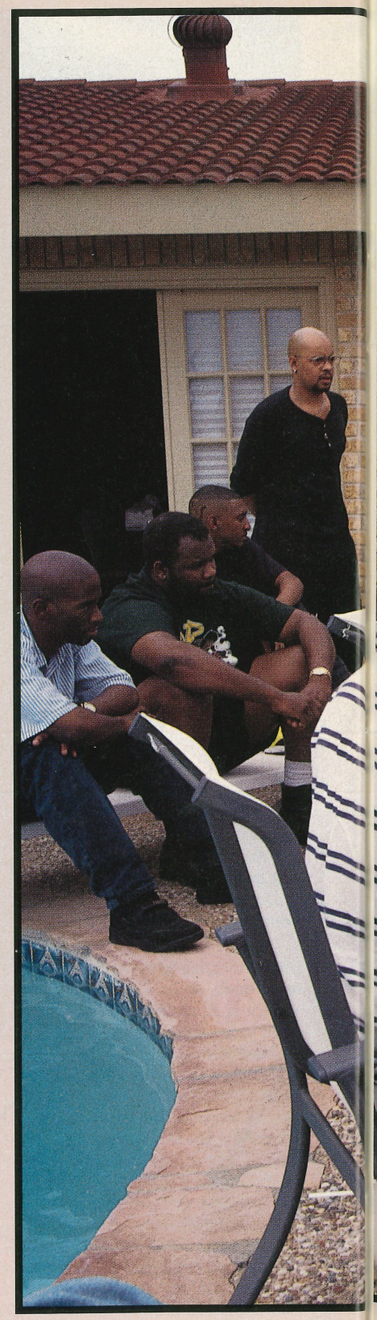
By the time THE SOURCE first asked the question ("Gangsta Rappers: Violent Heroes Or Negative Role Models?") on our cover back in December of 1990, "F— Tha Police" had already earned N.W.A a love note from the FBI, Geffen Records had refused to distribute the new Geto Boys album and Ice Cube had already "kicked the bitch in the tummy," lyrics which, to be fair, made even the most hardened hip-hop head pause for a second. But these controversies seem almost quaint compared to the hailstorm that would very much like to drown the music today.

A lot has changed since 1990. The Rodney King rebellion of April 1992 put South Central Los Angeles on the front pages, plastering the world with images of young Black men, dressed just like their favorite rappers, erupting in anger. Suddenly, gangsta rappers were either prophets for foreshadowing this explosion or villains for inciting trouble. Either way, all people knew was that gangsta rap had something to do with the "riots." After the media and big-time politicians got everyone riled up about crime, the images of accused young Black male suspects and the images of young Black males *talking* about doing some shit got linked in the public eye. Then folks looked around and saw Crips in New Orleans, Bloods in Denver and even a crew of white Crips in Omaha. They saw what the authorities like to call "gang chic." They saw baggy pants and bandanas all over the urban areas and the suburbs. They saw *The Chronic* hover in the top ten and saw *Doggystyle* enter the pop charts at number one and they just about had a cow. Certainly, they figured, this rap music must be stopped.

That's how gangsta rap got to be the field where this timebomb of racial politics exploded. Somehow it ceased being an artform that has interesting things to say about America and became a whipping boy for everyone to use to get their frustrations out on. Those of us who love this music are not only facing attacks from conservatives and white liberals, but also from a healthy chunk of the generation of African Americans who marched with Dr. Martin Luther King. Unfortunately, they've decided that they'd rather spend time scoring points with powerful whites by taking bites at Snoop Dogg instead of pushing to get resources into our communities. The saddest thing is that these attacks on rap have helped to set the stage for perhaps the most oppressive and wrongheaded crime legislation ever. "Three strikes out?" Mandatory sentences? More cops? More prisons? Utter bullshit. And you know what? Hardly a peep in protest from any of the people who are snapping at Snoop's ankles.

Whenever the TV cameras get cranked up to delve into the anti-gangsta rap muck, the rappers appearing on the programs automatically get put on the defensive. THE SOURCE decided to assemble a crew of prominent artists, so finally there could be a discussion about so-called gangster rap that took place *within* the hip-hop community. **RAP-A-LOT RECORDS** owner **JAMES SMITH** graciously offered to host us at his ranch right outside of Houston. **SCARFACE**, whose *The World Is Yours* (Rap-A-Lot), is approaching platinum, is about to drop his fourth (if you

SEATED AT THE G-RAP ROUNDTABLE:
ALLEN S. GORDON (SEATED, STRIPED SHIRT), RAY DOG (BLACK CAP TO THE BACK), EIHT (LIGHT BLUE JERSEY), HAVOC (BLACK SKI CAP), SCARFACE (GEORGETOWN HAT)



EDITED BY ROB MARRIOTT, JAMES BERNARD AND ALLEN S. GORDON
PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHI MODU / C²

REALITY CHECK

include his *veeery* early first effort) solo joint. The first single, "Hand of the Dead Body," a duet with Ice Cube, attacks those who attack our music. **MC EIHT** and **DJ SLIP** just finished **COMPTON'S MOST WANTED**'s fourth album, *We Come Strapped* (Epic), and were preparing for the release of its single, "All For The Money." **SPICE 1** interrupted some tour dates to join us in Texas. Soon, he'll start shooting his first film, co-starring (coincidentally) Scarface and MC Eiht. His last album, *187 He Wrote* (Jive), just went gold. **HAVOC DA MOUTHPIECE** of **SOUTH CENTRAL CARTEL** flew in to join us from LA. After selling more than of 200,000 copies of their independently released debut, the group's first major label joint, *'N' Gatz We Truss* (GWK/DJ West/RAL/Chaos), just came out. Fourteen-year-old **2LOW** released his debut, *Funky Lil Brother.* He joined us late, after we had devoured the BBQ lunch (chicken and beef, no pork), because school doesn't get out until 3:30 and he had run out of his alloted "excused absence" days. **RAY DOG** of **THE ALMIGHTY RSO** jetted in from Boston. After spending ten years locking Boston down, RSO was in the process of closing a deal with RCA Records that should take the group to another level when Ray joined us. Ray left Houston to fly back to Boston to polish up tracks for their new EP and finish the video for the first single, "Hell-bound."

RAY DOG OF THE ALMIGHTY RSO AND MC EIHT OF COMPTON'S MOST WANTED

With its endless mirrors and marble, James Smith's ranch has a certain "unlived in" quality. That's because the 30-acre spread is not his main residence; the 29-year-old Smith has several homes in Houston, in addition to his real estate holdings around the country. The ranch is his getaway spot. We held the summit on the back patio next to the swimming pool where we could see Smith's horses quietly roaming in the field behind the back fence, and we could hear some of his boys playing pool upstairs. Since James Smith insists on keeping his game on the mad DL, the Ferraris weren't on public display.

While we were waiting for the soundman to set up, Eiht started baggin' on Havoc's fluorescent green BMW, the one featured in South Central Cartel's "Gang Stories." "I saw this fool on the 110 [Long Beach Freeway] rolling around in the lime green BMW with green tint on the windows," Eiht laughed, playfully pointing at Havoc. "You must have been fuckin' around with them Mexicans, 'cause only Mexicans hook they shit up like that." Before Havoc could jump in to defend his prized ride, Eiht prompted Spice 1 to "tell these niggas what happened to your '64, Spice." Spice told everyone how somebody boosted his car right in front of his house. He got it back but all the equipment that made the car special—stereo, Daytons, speakers, 350 horsepower engine—are gone.

There was still time for some dice. Throwing some tiny-ass Fisher Price dice, Havoc, Eiht and a couple of other brothers lay out, snatch up and trade bills with lightning speed: *What they hittin', nigga? You got seven, w'sup with seven? I got seven fool! Then I got a dime on Hav. C'mon Hav! Uhh. . . 5-2, talk to me. . . Damn! C'mon, five-deuce talk to me. . . uhh! Yeah, nigga, keep rollin' that fake shit.* By the time Scarface rolled up in his new eggplant-colored BMW 850i, it was clear that he was having a good week. At the photo shoot for the cover, we'd already seen the black Porsche 968 convertible. He swooped up Eiht in it to take him for a ride to the new crib that he was making a down payment on. 'Face had just gotten a fat check and was anxious to get moved in. None of the rest of us saw the spot, but Eiht came back talking about, "I just want to rent a room in that house." Don't get the idea that Scarface was showing out. If he wanted to do that, he could have paraded the yellow Ferrari 348 or the black customized Mercedes 560 SEL with the TV and the $5000 paint job or the red Nissan 300 ZX or any of his other four cars—so he was actually being quite modest.

Scarface was in place. The dice game had petered out. Lunch was but a memory. So it must have been time to start. From THE SOURCE, contributor Allen S. Gordon (who flew in from Grambling), Associate Editor Rob Marriott and I handled the questioning. **JAMES BERNARD**

GANGSTA, GANGSTA

ALLEN S. GORDON: What's your definition of a gangsta?

HAVOC: Well, I come from the city where the Bloods and Crips originated. The gang situation in LA is all about gangs, man, and the word gangster kinda relates to the LA situation. The brothers in the streets is gangbanging cause they ain't got nothing to do. And when I was out in the street, I mean, I'm still in the street, but when I was out there it was like I had either to go to school or go into the street, get paid, you know. I had to figure out something to keep money 'cause life is all about being paid, living and survivin'. And when you have lack of opportunity in the community, know'm sayin, then you start to fit them certain stereotypes. Not that you wanna do it. It's like a gangster is something nobody wants have nothing to do with. You know, we Black, we ain't got a lot of money, a lot of opportunity, so the media, white America, they label us gangsters. Yeah, I fit the gangsta label. You can call me what you want, just send me my check on time.

It's hard man, trying to do something positive when you done did so much negative. When you do negative, you do it because you wanna survive. And then all the rest just come along with it. We tell our life story, about what we go through, why we had to sell dope, why we had to jack niggas. So if they wanna label the brothers out there kicking that reality rap about what's going on gangstas, then let us be gangstas. I'ma be a G 'till I die.

MC EIHT: My definition of a gangsta. *[Pauses]* To me, how you become a gangster in Compton you're just naturally brought into the shit. Know what'm sayin'? You live in the particular neighborhoods where niggas is bangin' and you see the shit everyday and basically if you ain't got nobody there who got control of your lifestyle, if you just a wild little young-ass nigga, the streets gon' get you. As far as for me, living on the street that niggas slang the dope and the sherm and there were like, two gangs on the same street—we had Mexicans and niggas warrin' — it was just something to look at everyday. So when I got of age that I could get out there and hit the streets and wouldn't have to worry about moms bitchin' and tell a nigga to come in the crib and shit, and I got that mentality of fuck everybody. Basically it's wanting to belong. Being a part of something. It ain't like they make you, it ain't like a motherfucker tell you, "Gangbang or we gonna kick your ass." It just something you get involved in. I don't know why they call it gangster rap cause ain't nobody here wearin' colors and rags and shit when we makin records. *That's* bangin' on wax. That's gangsta rappin' right there: niggas claiming sets and colors and shit.

SCARFACE: *[Pauses, laughs]* Gangsta. My definition of gangster, man, is somebody who has the power to take over a whole city, state or country. To me, that's a gangster. Like Al Capone or John Gotti. That's gangsta. Or the presidents, you know'm sayin? They're gangsters. I think that word gangsta came from white folks that wanted to get that jacket off they're back. So they gave it to us. That's why they call us gangstas, but they really be the gangstas.

ALLEN: So with that term, gangsta rap, do y'all like being labeled that?

EIHT: Being labeled is something we can't stop. Like I said, when muthafuckas look at us the first image they think is gangster. Because we the niggas who deal, we talk about the goverment who fucks us, we talk about the homies who got killed, we talk about the homies who slang dope, so I guess for the fact we representing where we come from, we're gangsta rappers. I guess if we were on stage with tight-ass draws and shit *[Scarface laughs]* we'd be commercial rappers, know'm sayin'? Its not like we trying to fit into this format of being that shit, it's just reality. Before niggas was rappin' we was in the streets. Point blank. I'm just letting muthafuckas know where I come from and that's what it's about. I ain't dancin', I ain't shakin' my ass, I ain't talkin' about muthafuckas it's time to party and boogie. I'm talkin' about this is me, I'm a nigga. The homies wanna hear that shit so that's what I'm kickin'.

SCARFACE: Furthermore, if we was talkin' about shit like that wouldn't nobody buy our shit. Ain't nobody wanna hear that muthafuckin' shit.

SPICE-1: Then they'll know you're lyin'. Like a muthafucka.

EIHT: Nigga, you ain't from no goddamn LA, no Houston, no Oakland shakin' your ass. Nigga you out there runnin' from the cops.

RAY DOG: Gangsta was back in the '20's and shit. When muthafuckas was running liquor. Whiteys was called that years ago and it really wasn't no issue. But the whole thing with the Congressional hearings is that they really don't want no black dudes to get no loot. Period. They wasn't saying shit when Ozzie Osborne and all the rock muthafuckas was bitin'—

SPICE: Biting off bat heads—

RAY: Biting little puppies's heads off.

EIHT: The whole problem is the muthafuckas is scared that all them little white muthafuckas is on the shit. And they looking at all them white muthafuckas in Toledo, Ohio that wearin' rags and shotguns and they blame it on us like, *[puts on a nasal Caucasian voice]* "Well, that goddamn Scarface, you know?"

SPICE: They ain't got nobody else to blame it on.

EIHT: To me, it just something else to get off they chest. To try to find a scapegoat for this shit. They gon' say well fuck it: White Johnny killed white Sam because he was listening to the fucking Geto Boys. That's a fuckin' lie! You not stupid. Ain't no song in this motherfuckin' planet is gonna make you go out and kill nobody. Muthafuckas decide that they want to be like them niggas. We not glorifyin' no gangs, 'cause like I said, ain't n'ar a niggas on the muthafucka throwin' up no sets. I ain't talkin' the niggas I run with, who we kill up.*That's* gangsta rappin'. It just something for them to justify themselves by saying, "That's the reason muthafuckas in America is goin' crazy." You go to the movies, every muthafuckin' day you see Arnold Shwartzeneggar killin' every muthafucka but nobody get at the movie theaters and ban Arnold for cuttin' muthafuckas up. You can make all that make-believe shit for they ass. I just talk about the hood. That's just spittin' the real, it ain't gangsta rap.

> "My definition of a gangster is someone who has the power to take over a whole city, state or country. Like the presidents."
> —Scarface

NIGGA PUT A STRAP IN MY HAND

EIHT: My hood was there before I came. Tell you the truth, muthafuckas been jackin' and killin' from the beginning of time. Muthafuckas were runnin' around in three piece suits with the little brims on, killin' up muthafuckas. They was drive byin' way back then! How niggas got into it, I couldn't tell you. I was thirteen years old, looking at niggas at the corner. I'm seeing niggas 17, 18 year olds rollin' in El Caminos on Daytons and Blazers and all that shit. And I'm like, I ain't goin' to get that shit goin' to school. I ain't finnah get that shit goin' to college. Muthafucking McDonald's, Boy's Market, ain't nobody finnah pay me what they gettin'. These niggas got the bitches, they got the gold, they got the cars. And I'm knowing me, wakin' up every morning grabbing my motherfucking books I ain't finnah get that shit. So everyday after school and head down to the *corner.*

SPICE: Where everybody at.

EIHT: Next thing you know you hangin with them niggas every other day, they knowin' you're name, they like, "Aw whassup little nigga whatchu doin'?" Whumpti, next thing you know you a part of it. "Wanna roll with us here?" Next thing you know you in the back seat—

HAVOC: —Smokin' bud and you drinkin' forties...

EIHT: A year later you out there, O.G. this and that with the khakis. That's how it happened. I didn't see shit. I couldn't see school. I couldn't see a job, I couldn't see moms, nobody. All I seen was the hood, the colors and I'm out there. I didn't give a fuck. Nigga put a strap in my hand. I had back from about fifty niggas. So I didn't have to worry 'bout a nigga. All I had to do was throw on my khakis and my sweatshirt, put my rag in my back pocket and motherfuckas was intimidated by that shit.

RAY: That shit build up your self-esteem.

EIHT: You feel like, 'nigga I'm from whoompti-whoomp I ain't afraid a no-muthafuckin'-body'. I might be the smallest muthafucka from the hood but goddammit I know I got fifty muthafuckas around the corner and I'll walk in the neighborhood dissin' you, dissin' your momma. 'Nigga, fuck y'all," Then walk right across the street and hang with them fifty niggas.

But then you go through gettin' jacked all the time. The police come through your hood; you ain't got nothin', you ain't got no guns, no dope but you still goin' to jail 'cause you gangbangin'. You get tired of that shit. A year of gettin' jacked. A year of muthafuckas comin' through your neighborhood bus'ing. A year of your homies just fallin' and shit. You get sick of that shit. It was like shit, I'm still down for the 'cause but I got to live. I want some snaps. That's when the rap came in. I started doin' little tapes for my neighborhood, talkin' 'bout the homies and the niggas we didn't like and the other sets we shoot up and shit like that. So with that shit all the homies hear your tape next thing you know, you got fifty niggas ridin' around with your tape from the hood. So *bam* the next thing you know the shit turn serious and you out of the gang shit but you still in that shit. I can still go to my neighborhood, niggas is "Whassup nigga". Don't nobody call me Eiht. Niggas call me what I used to gangbang. "Whassup loc. Whatchu been up to? Come smoke a joint." They still there. You might get established, you might have four million dollars. You might move fifty fuckin' miles away but them niggas is still there. Your enemies is still there. Niggas I used to fight and beat they asses up ten years ago see me on the street talkin' 'bout "I'm gonna get your ass." Niggas don't live that down. That's why I'm still rollin' around with straps, goin' to my neighborhood still keepin' in touch with the homies.

HAVOC: 'Cause the same homies that's in your hood gonna save your back one day. But if you get to thinkin' you ain't down with the hood no more—

EIHT: Oh it's over. Then they asses comin' after you.

FREELANCE NIGGAS

HAVOC: Man all the young kids in South Central idolize the gangbangers. It ain't no idolizin' some teacher or your momma.

EIHT: A female in LA would rather pick a dope dealin' ass gang muthafucka before she pick a muthafucka working a 9 to 5. 'Cause she gonna be livin' that fast life of money and hustlin' and she rather have that than have a muthafucka punchin' the clock 9 to 5, comin' home talkin' about baby, we got bills, the rent is due. She'd rather have a freelance nigga.

SPICE: You can't even live a decent life workin' no job.

RAY: How you gonna live a decent life and you only gettin' a hundred and seventy five a week? What the fuck can you do with $175 five a week?

HAVOC: When you can make $175 in two hours?

EIHT: Niggas in LA is gangbangin' and dope dealin' 'cause if you a nigga livin' in South Central, Compton, Watts—

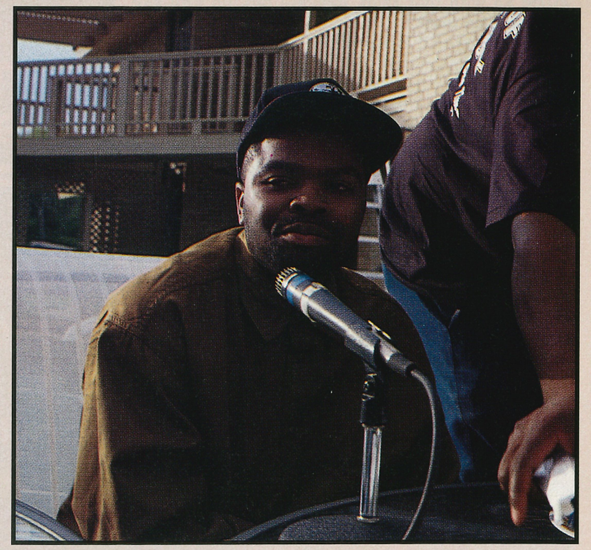
HAVOC: Long Beach.

REALITY CHECK

EIHT:—You ain't workin, period. There is no work.
HAVOC: You got brothers out here worried about all these small issues. The real issues need to be talked about. Like how come brothers ain't got jobs, why we ain't got no education going on in our community. Muthafuckas can spend on trips to the moon and spend billions. But won't spend a dime on the hood but sit up and label us gangstas.
SPICE: I don't like nobody labeling me as nothin'. Just look at me as a person. And realize what I'm sayin' and listen to how I'm talkin'.
RAY: And if they can relate to your music that shit's cool.
SPICE: You know why we sell so many tapes? It's got to be a lot of fools out there feeling the same way we do. Where I stay at, where I used to kick it at, you see 500 niggas wearing Pendeltons and dickies in black—those the niggas buying your tapes. *Then* the white boy. It's your boys on your block buying your tape. When I came out I threw about 50, 60 tapes in my hood and my shit just blew up. No radio play, no tv. It was straight ghetto. My homeboys was buying it.
EIHT: I just make the muthafucking music that I know muthafuckas gonna listen to. It's all about—
RAY: —Gettin' loot.
EIHT: It's all about—
HAVOC:—Gettin' paid.
EIHT: To me, its about the music. I just make music I know muthafuckas gonna relate to. I don't speak on gangs all the muthafuckin' time. I just try to make funky ass nigga music. I don't try to apeal to the white people the japs, the chinese, the mexicans. I make Nigga music. I make music that I'ma like even if I wasn't making the shit. I don't look at the muthafuckas who walk into the Warehouses and the Tower Records and shit like that, I make it for the niggas who gonna be like, "Man, let me dub that shit, lemme get a copy."
SPICE: Cause to white kids it's just music. To the Black kids it's real.
RAY: For a long time, Black music was like Curtis Mayfield kickin' shit about pimpin', Superfly all that shit. That's why it's fucked when you got that Black lady [C. Delores Tucker] dissin' because she was back there listening to that shit. Then Black music was fucked up 'cause disco wasn't sayin shit and everybody was happy. Then rap comes in starts talkin' about the ghetto again and boom, we got a problem.
HAVOC: How could that lady go against rap when you got millions of other issues that this lady can take her time to deal with?
RAY: As long as you ain't rappin' about shit that raisin' conciousness about the way shit's out here then you can rap about whatever the fuck you want to.
JAMES SMITH: Hey, let's see if we can change their name from gangsta rap to reality rap. That gangsta shit's throwing me off.
HAVOC: Yeah, 'cause you been sitting there quiet for a long time.
JAMES SMITH: Yeah, I can't comment on that, just reality. Real shit, you know.
RAY: THE SOURCE gotta drop that shit too, though.
JAMES SMITH: I'd like to ban that name, gangsta rap. Reality. Reality rap from this day on.

TELL A MAN THE TRUTH, HE GET HYPE

SCARFACE: I don't know if ya'll remember the movie The Warriors? *[Everyone nods]* Now you wanna talk about shit that influences people? Man, I was about eight years old when I first saw it and me and my little partners had a gang—I think we was called the panthers or some shit. But we used to go around with closet sticks and beat people's asses, dog. The visual affect has more than the audio affect. Seeing somebody fuck somebody up would do me more harm than hearing somebody fuck somebody up.
JAMES BERNARD: Does hearing it have impact?
SCARFACE: Not as much as seeing. If I told you I seen a muthafucka's head blow off it wouldn't fuck you up as much if really seen somebody's head blown the fuck up.
JAMES BERNARD: But does it have any impact?
SCARFACE: Everything has impact.
RAY: I can't front. When I listen to y'all music, the shit hypes me. It be hypin' me.



PRESIDENT, CEO OF RAP-A-LOT RECORDS JAMES SMITH AT THE MIC

JAMES SMITH: Whenever you tell a man the truth he get hype.
SCARFACE: If it's in your heart to do wrong, you're gonna do wrong whether you listen to classical music or if you listening to Axel Rose.
EIHT: I just like the *shit*. If Face got some shit that's hard or Spice? It don't make me wanna go out and grab my muthafuckin' strap. I might sit there a go, 'well goddamn that shit is funky' and that muthafucka got them raps. Rappers try to symbolize the shit they sayin'. We hypnotize muthafuckas.
SCARFACE: Question: What's so bad about what we sayin'?
EIHT: They tryin' to figure out why young Black muthafuckas who never had a muthafuckin' thing in they life, how did we rise to such a muthafuckin level that we got everybody in the United States wantin' to be on our dick. *That's* they problem. They problem is they got young Black muthafuckas comin' up from these inner city ghettoes makin' money and gettin' a muthafuckin' name.
RAY: Rap is a scapegoat.
HAVOC: 'Cause that the shit people don't hear and see.
EIHT: It's all bullshit to me because if muthafuckas look, it's an art and it's entertainment. We are tryin' to entertain our niggas.
HAVOC: Just like Dolly Parton get on the record for her white people, we get on the record and rap about Black people.
HAVOC: 'Cause I don't buy no country and western record. I can't fuck wit' it. I get me a rap record. People relate to what their culture is revolved around.
EIHT: That nigga Garth Brooks say he love you on every fucking album in a country way and he sell nine, ten million records.
HAVOC: He got four or five records selling at the same time.
SCARFACE: At the same goddamn time! That nigga got thirty million records on the charts at one time.
RAY: Up in that studio, I seen a record. Clint Black "Killing Time" platinum like hell.
HAVOC: I wanna do a duet with him anyway. So I could sell some records, we can do a rap country and western. *[Sporatic laughter]* That shit'll go. *[More laughter].*

BLACK ON BLACK

JAMES BERNARD: Are you guys worried at all about all these attacks—
SCARFACE: I ain't worried about a goddamn thing. The first ammendment protects me.
JAMES SMITH: I tell you what worries me about this whole thing. When Black muthafuckas like Don Cornelius and all these Uncle Tom-ass Black men fuckin' us right along with the goverment. Rev. Butts, all them muthafuckas.
JAMES BERNARD: Why does that bother you?
JAMES SMITH: I just hate the fact that Blacks been Blacks worst enemy

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REALITY CHECK

through all this shit along with the government. And when I see them in cahoots with the government then that fucks with me. I hate to see that.

EIHT: Them color-coated ass—I don't even call them Black, they ain't niggas to me. *[Everyone begins to speak at once mentioning C. Delores Tucker and Dionne Warwick]*

JAMES SMITH: Dionne Warwick? Dionne Warwick fuckin' with rap?

EIHT: Dionne Warwick.

JAMES SMITH: A psychic-typa bitch fuckin' with rap? *[laughter]*

HAVOC: She got allegations against her for mishandlin' funds from her AIDS campaign!

EIHT: So she turn around a run a national campaign against Black muthafuckas.

SCARFACE: I think Dionne Warwick, she just mainly tryin' to get paid. First of all that psychic shit—that's ungodly. You don't tamper with God like that.

UNITED GHETTOES

HAVOC: All ghettoes are the same.

SCARFACE: It ain't no different. Lemme tell why it ain't no different. 'Cause the same shit that happens in California all the way over to muthafuckin' Maine is happening all over in the Black community. Same shit goin' on.

EIHT: Niggas is killin', niggas is slangin'. I done been to the buttfuckest town that you can go to and them muthafuckas is bangin'. Niggas is doin' that shit everywhere.

SCARFACE: When I was growing up and shit way back you see a muthafucka die, it stick with you for a minute. Nowadays, it ain't shit.

HAVOC: You get numb to it.

EIHT: You see it the shit on TV every fuckin' day. In LA you see a muthafucka get popped every day.

SCARFACE: It ain't in one muthafuckin' city. This shit is all over the muthafuckin' country in the Black community.

ROB: So how do you define life in that context?

EIHT: I define life as being muthafuckin' careful in doin' what you gonna do. And don't even give a fuck about what no muthafuckas say. 'Cause like they say you only here once, ain't no comin' back. Muthafuckas sit up there about how we should be this and we should be that—be real, fuck it. 'Cause if you wasn't real you wouldn't of made it this far. So don't get no muthafuckin' buckin' knees 'cause you got a gang'a them white ole-ass bastards sittin' up under the fuckin' flag talkin' about let's try to stop this gangsta rap shit.

SCARFACE: At one time they was talkin' about bannin' rock'n roll. See, I know about this shit 'cause I used to fuck with rock'n roll back in the day. Rock'n roll went through the same shit that rap is goin' through now.

EIHT: They gonna try to put it down harder this time for the simple fact that we got dark skin. Period. Because we kickin' that shit that niggas can relate to they feel that we have to put a stop to this shit.

ROB: Forget about the goverment and all that shit, how do you see the music affecting your neighborhood?

RAY: The music cannot affect the neighborhood, the neighborhood affects the music.

ROB: No, I'm sayin' in the future-what do you see it goin' to?

HAVOC: The music gonna change with time, time gonna change with music. What's goin' on in the year 2002, we'll be rappin' about. We can't predict what goin' on twenty years from now. We worryin' about what's happenin' now.

EIHT: If we rollin' in goddamn spaceships on gold Daytons, Im'a still be kickin' the shit about the hood back in 1980, 1970. That's where I'm at. I'm stuck. If the nigga from my muthafuckin hood come up to me and say, "Goddammit, that is the shit," I've accomplished what the fuck I supposed to do. Fuck five years from now because goddammit, you could put up fifty skyscrapers around this muthafucka it ain't gonna stop the fact that these niggas is gonna be there. And their kids gonna be there and their kids' kids is gonna be there and that's why the gang shit keep goin'. 'Cause if I have a son right now, he gonna be livin' in Compton and he gonna be right there—it's a fuckin' pattern, man. It ain't gonna never change.

HAVOC: That's the way they got us. They got us in this cycle, an unbreakable cycle.

RAP LIKE CRACK

EIHT: They could stop the rap shit, whatever, it's not gonna stop them gangs. Them niggas ain't goin' nowhere. We can go to school! We can get muthafuckin' jobs! We can get 9 to 5's but niggas don't want that shit.

JAMES SMITH: But niggas is gonna go somewhere if they keep passing these goddamn laws they pass. That three times you're out shit.

SCARFACE: That was made strictly for the negroes and the mexicans, dog.

RAY: The same shit with the powder shit.

SCARFACE: You ain't gonna get no time with powder but if you caught with an ounce a crack? That's worth a kilo of powder.

HAVOC: But if it's three strikes out, the government been out! Muthafuckas got a zillion strikes! So let's lock they asses up!

SPICE: There ain't no self-defense law in California. Niggas be busin' into the side of your car and there ain't no self-defense law? You get caught with a strap you gone. California is one of the crime capitals in the whole country. We living in a situation where we can't even protect ourselves?

RAY: Jails is a big business for the government. The more jails they build the more money for the state.

JAMES SMITH: This rap shit is the biggest challenge to the government in a long ass time. It's bigger than Martin Luther King and alla them.

JAMES BERNARD: How does it challenge the government?

JAMES SMITH: Just the power with this rap. It's all about what we do with this shit now. But it is the biggest challenge to this government ever since I can remember. They can't fuck with it because there so many real dominatin' niggas comin' together that—

HAVOC: And when you have white America listening to it, they kids who didn't know what's really goin' on in these Black communities now will really hear from a real perspective.

JAMES SMITH: Their parents hid it from them for so long and now we tellin' 'em what really goin' on they hardly believe it. They like this shit like they like movies. *(Everyone begins speaking at the same time.)*

SCARFACE: We could talk about this shit 'till we couldn't even talk about this shit no muthafuckin' more. But if them muthafuckas really wanted to shut this rap shit down, they'd shut this muthafucka down. *(Again, everyone begins speaking on top of each other)*

ROB: Say in three years they say your shit can't be sold in the Wiz, the Tower Records—

RAY: So what?

SCARFACE: They gonna start treating rap like crack. You get caught with a rap tape you get ten years.

EIHT: Lemme tell you why they ain't gonna never do it. Them same white muthafuckas tryinah shut it down, you got them same muthafuckas—

ROB: Making mad dough.

EIHT: You got them big-ass Jews and shit sayin, "Ain't no muthafuckin' way you gonna stop us from makin' money off these niggas." And that's when you gonna get the president of Epic and Warner Brothers comin' to court.

SCARFACE: But I think that deep down we all really believe that if they wanted to close the door on this shit they could.

JAMES SMITH: I don't agree. I think we bigger than the government.

> **" I just make funky-ass nigga music. I don't try to appeal to the whites, the japs, the chi-nese, the mexicans, none of that. I just make nigga music. "**
>
> **-MC Eiht**

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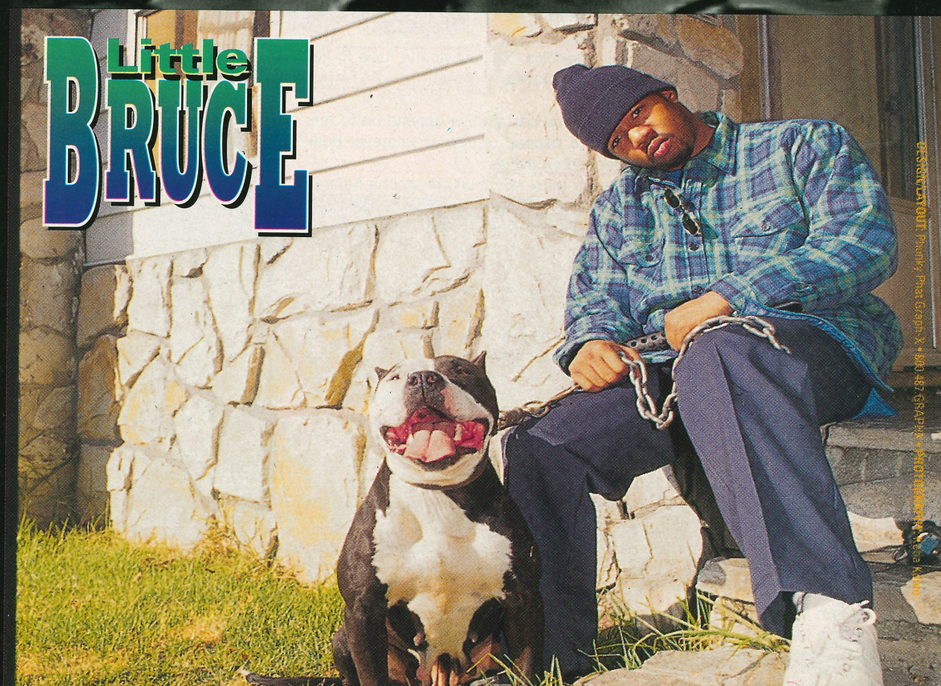
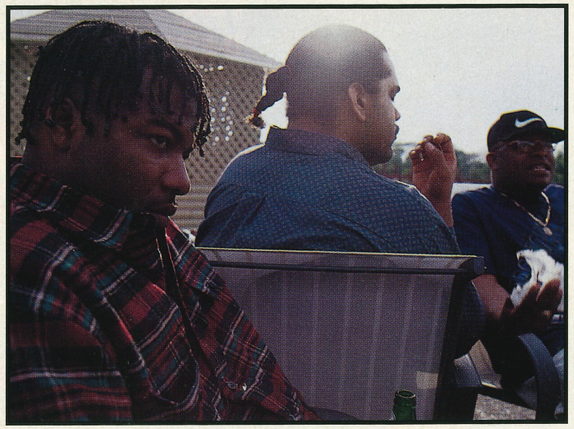




SPICE-1, "TINY" AND SCARFACE

Scarface: Yeah, if we all stick together we would be.
James Smith: That is the seed of destruction —them negative thoughts like that. Giving them the credit to be able to do that is giving them the power. I don't think they could do shit unless we allow it.
Havoc: If they did stop selling records in the stores people would go back to buying it in the street.
James Smith: Everybody talkin' like we can't have our own distribution company. Everything the Jews are doing we can do it.
Scarface: But the niggas don't stick together, man. Eh, niggas ain't good people to go into business with.
James Smith: That's some niggas not all of 'em. *We* in business together. They got real niggas like that in every city.
Scarface: But you got niggas see something like this [*referring to James's ranch*] and don't want to see another man sit like this.
James Smith: Jealousy is everywhere. The Jews got their jealous folks too.

WE AIN'T NO PSYCHICS

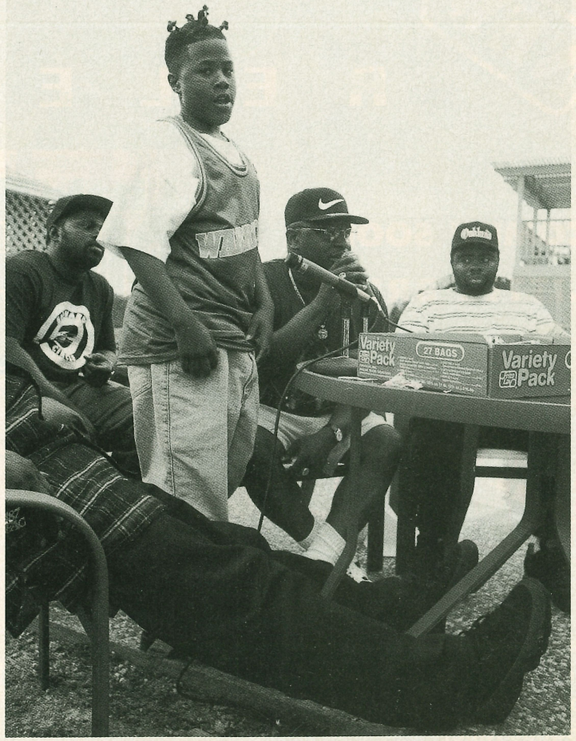
James Bernard: You guys were talking earlier about how stuff is in Black communities all over the country. Where do you see it going? What's gonna happen to our generation?
James Smith: Let's call Dionne Warwick.
Scarface: We ain't no muthafuckin psychics. We just gonna have to get on the bus and ride the muthafucka 'till it stop.
James Bernard: Aren't you worried?
Scarface: There's only one thing that you can always depend on in this fuckin' world. You may not be able to depend on rap or whatever business you in but you you always depend on dying.
Eiht: I look at it like this: I don't even think about what's gonna happen a year from now, two years now. Cause I figure it like this: I can't see shit. I can't see tommorrow. I can see me kickin' it right here with all the real niggas and shit. I can't see two months from now.
Ray: That's a wasted thought process.
Eiht: Muthafuckas is successful now, right now. Everybody in this muthafucka got the mentality we don't give a fuck about what nobody say. Nigga gonna make his money, he gonna live like he wanna live. When that day come if a nigga got to die, that's that day. For the community—it always seems to me that eveytime a nigga get to a certain level he got to come back to the community and he got to put community centers, etc. That justifies him by saying, "Okay, I love the community and I'ma do something for where I'm from." I ain't dead, muthafucka. That's me. When I was in the muthafuckin' neighborhood, I ran with the niggas. Niggas didn't put no money in my pocket, niggas wasn't givin' me no dope. Niggas wasn't doin' shit for me except sayin', "He the homie." So for my community, I'ma make the music that my niggas like but I ain't gonna sit up here and go build me a child center over here and build me this over there 'cause that's fuckin' bullshit. I'm in this shit for me.
Lloyd: Hey, Eiht. Watch [Uncle] Sammy though, if you make two he gonna fuck you outta one.

REALITY CHECK

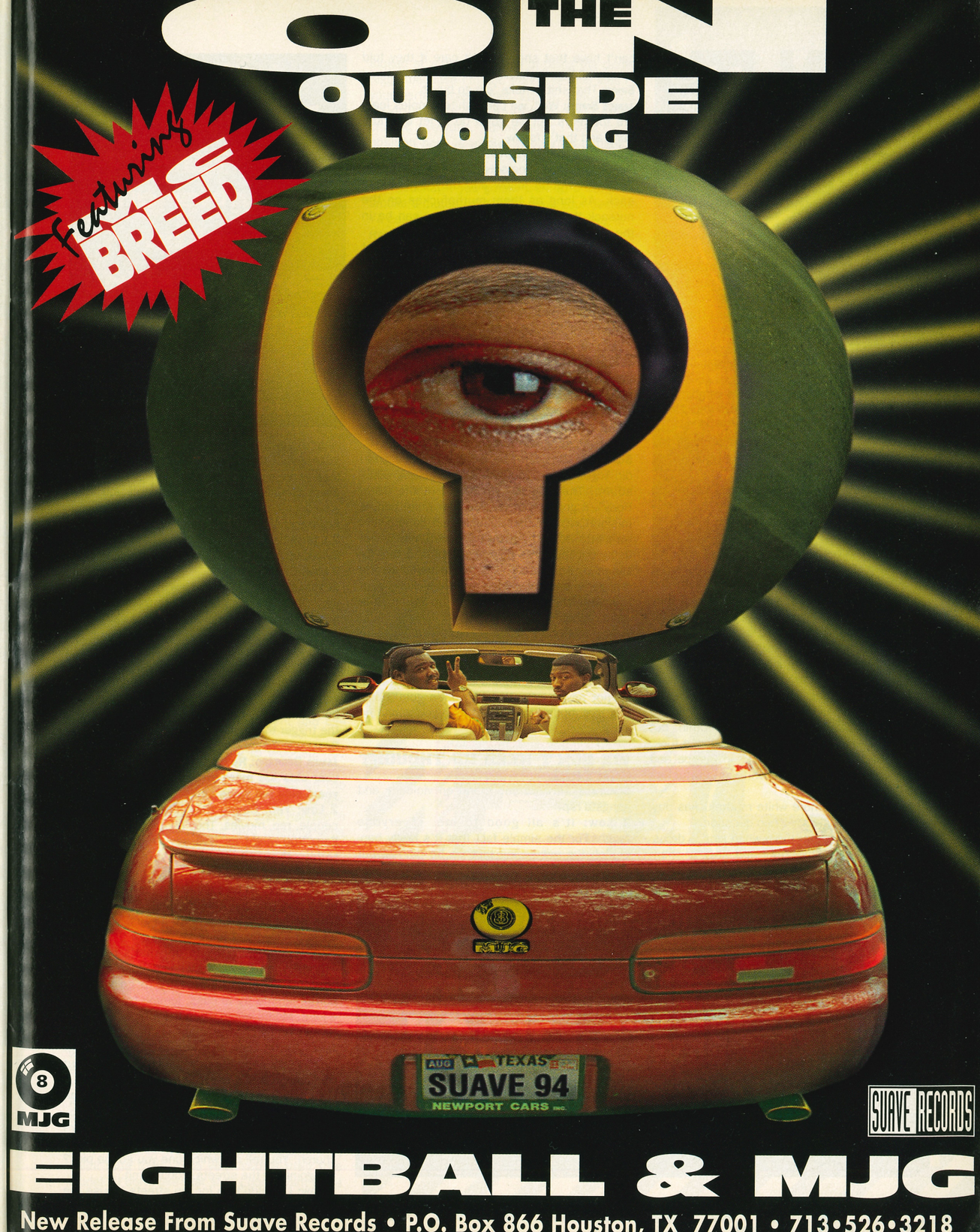
Eiht: Well, that's always. He gonna get it. That's something you can't escape. You get that muthafucka off your back and you don't give a fuck about what nobody say. You don't look to be no fuckin' role model, you don't look to build benefit funds for helpin' AIDS. Fuck that shit! Them muthafuckas ain't lookin' for you! As for me, I'm makin' my money, I'm bankin' it, I'm helpin' my peoples as far as my family. If I got niggas I was down with from the beginning, I'm helpin' them out. But I'm not this muthafucka to throw every fuckin' penny I got to build shit just to prove I'm down with the community. Muthafucka, I say Compton on every muthafuckin' record I got. I'm givin' it up to the fullest! Nigga, if that ain't good enough then fuck it. You ain't put no money in my pocket.

ON THE NUTSACK

Eiht: I ain't no political muthafucka. I ain't talkin' about muthafuckin stop the violence. I ain't talkin about the Black movement 'cause that shit ain't goin' on in the hood. Ain't no muthafucka comin' up with no bean pies standin' on my corner.
Lloyd: That's goin' on my brother.
Eiht: Not in my hood.
Lloyd: You gettin' fucked in the blind.
Eiht: No, I'm not gettin' fucked in the blind.
Lloyd: Like when you workin' with that peckerwood at that label and you gettin' 20 cent—
Eiht: When I'm working with that peckerwood, that peckerwood is signing my check.
Unidentified homie: But there's a brother across from you *[pointing to*



FUNKY LIL BROTHER: 2 LOW RESPONDS TO QUESTIONS AS ALLEN, SCARFACE AND HOMIE LOOK ON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REALITY CHECK

James Smith] that can sign your check as well baby.

Havoc: Everybody can't get on a Black man's label!

Eiht: I don't take no 20 cent. I might take 20 thousand. I hear what you sayin' but I ain't finnah own no record company.

Lloyd: But you can! You just as strong as another muthafucka—

Eiht: I'm just as strong as another muthafucka but goddammit if they don't give you the leeway to do it, it ain't goin' down.

James Smith: That's true. It's all in climbing the steps and gettin' to certain levels. You got to get started the best way you can.

Havoc: My father sing with a group called the Shi-Lites, they got ganked for twentysomething years.

Eiht: Them whitey muthafuckas that sit up there at them labels—I don't talk to them, I don't sit in meetings with they muthafuckin' asses, nothing.

Lloyd: You know why you don't have meeting with them? Because they don't want your mind in there with my brother. They know your mind is stronger than theirs. And they know if they fuck around and let your Black ass in there with 'em, you gonna win.

Eiht: Well, they fuckin' losin' right now cause I'm still makin' these gangsta records that my niggas is gonna hear. I'm winning with them white muthafuckas 'cause if I was losing, if that was the case, they wouldn't be tryin' to stop this muthafucka. If it wasn't nothin' but niggas listening to it they wouldn't give a fuck. Man, I did a muthafuckin' tour in Europe and their wasn't nothin' but white muthafuckas over there.

James Smith: It's more white muthafuckas buying this than niggas. Ain't no question.

Eiht: For the fact that them white kids is dressing like this, wearin' rags and saggin' them white muthafuckas with ties is goin', 'oh no we can't have that shit.' I don't care if they told every white muthafucka not to buy this shit.

Spice: That shit'll make 'em go buy it.

James Smith: Well, we been white peoples leaders for years. All we gotta do is let our nuts hang and that'll follow.

Eiht: If we call ourselves Compton Gangstas, they gonna call themselves Toledo Gangstas. They just wanna follow and they on the nutsack. As long as them muthafuckas on the nutsack they can keep ridin'. They can be in the record store *every fuckin'* release.

Havoc: Only thing the white man can't get that we got is a big dick. *[laughter]*

Eiht: And balls cause they ain't got 'em, goddammit.

James Smith: Well, I believe they sew on dicks and everything so. . . I say the heart.

ANOTHER COLD HAND

Eiht: But like Face say, what is gonna be done to get these muthafuckas off of our backs?

James Smith: Attack it on wax.

James Bernard: Scarface, why don't you talk about the song you're doin' with Ice Cube.

Scarface: Basically, the song that Cube and I did together is about the attack on the Black sound. The title is "The Hand of the Dead Body". It goes on to tell you how white people misinterpret our Black music and culture and turn into something that it's not. We're not using our music as no killing tool or a tool for violence. And those who fail to listen to the real game and knowledge that we kickin' about this real shit, we gonna end up feeling the hand of their dead body.

James Bernard: Is that what you hope to accomplish?

Scarface: You can take for what it's worth but to me that what it means to me. If you fuckin' up not paying attention to what's goin' on in this real muthafuckin world then you gonna be another cold hand.

WE DON'T NEED NO THOUGHT CONTROL

Scarface: How do you stand on violence and gangsta rap?

2 Low: It's all good to me. *[Everyone laughs]*For the simple fact that it's really happenin'. I'm not saying that we be doin' it but we mighta did it or already done it, know what'm sayin'?

Scarface: That's comin' from somebody thirteen years old.

James Bernard: Scarface why don't you interview 2 Low.

Scarface: A-ight. 2 Low.

2 Low: Whassup.

Scarface: What's your born given name?

2 Low: Cedric White.

Scarface: See. White. Naw, I'm fuckin with you. Does hearing gangsta rap music, honestly, make you wanna go out and be a gangsta?

2 Low: Naw. Rap music don't really pump me up to get into trouble. But I tell you, movies. I look at it like this: Rap music just tell you the rules, like, that you can pick up a gun. But if you look at a movie and actually see somebody cockin' it back, pickin' it up and pulling the trigger then you know how to do it.

Scarface: Visual has more impact than audio.

James Bernard: Hey 2 Low, do you feel like 13 year olds are more street wise than thirteen years olds ten years ago.

2 Low: Yep. Cause they kickin' it with older people, rap, movies. They another level now.

Eiht: You might as well say, if somebody 13 today, they 23. Because you grow up so muthafuckin' fast. There is so much shit for young people to be exposed to nowadays there is no way you can hide the shit. So before we hide some shit for the little niggas, we gonna let 'em know: you thirteen, you got the rest of your muthafuckin' life to do what's right and wrong. When I was thirteen, goddammit, you couldn't do shit! Lemme try to go watch a porno, lemme try to cuss, lemme try to smoke a joint. Moms would whup the fuck out of me.

Havoc: Times change, man.

James Smith: Look at it from a biblical point of view. Every generation is gonna get wiser but weaker. So that's some shit we can't control.

Eiht: If you gave a child an option, you can hang on the streets, sell dope, have the cars, the bitches or you can go to school eight hours a day, come home, can't go outside, go to church. You tell me which one you gonna pick? I'm going for the streets, goddammit.

2 Low: I wouldn't go for the streets 'cause the

> **"It's biblical. Every generation is gonna get wiser and weaker. So that's some shit we can't control."**
> **-James Smith**

To THE SOURCE and STAFF

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REALITY CHECK

streets is for people who wanna come up or else wanna be hard or somethin'. I rather go to school and get my education and learn more about the people who are tryinah fuck me and all that.

Havoc: What do you see doing with your education once you got it?

2 Low: Shit, I'll git me a good job, make money, learn how to invest it. Take certain classes, in business. I already have street knowledge, so now I'll have school knowledge too. Then I can't be stopped.

Scarface: He gonna have the best of both worlds.

Eiht: I ain't gonna lie. The only reason I went to school 'cause my mom hit that door every fuckin' mornin' "Git your muthafuckin ass up and go to the school." But if I had the opportunity to ditch I ditched. School was nothing to me. I got tired of the muthafuckas teachin' me about George Washington and Christopher Columbus and Abraham Lincoln. And they teach you about the same niggas every year—Martin Luther king and Harriet Tubman. That's it.

James Smith: *[Jokingly]* No Farrakhan, huh?

Eiht: No Farrakhan, no Marcus Garvey, no Malcolm. None of that.

Scarface: They teach about shit that makes niggas lose interest.

Ray: White schools get all that money. Black schools ain't got no money to give a muthafucka the right books and the right education. White schools got all the equipment and alla that—

Scarface: When I was going to Woodson we got uniforms from the other schools. I shoulder pads read the property of so-and-so on the muthafucka. We had the left-over shit. The left-over textbooks. Niggas just got short-handed in education. So now we out here teaching what we know now. David Gilmore and Roger Waters [of Pink Floyd] summed the shit up in the best way I ever heard. We don't need no muthafuckin' education. We don't need no thought control.

James Bernard: So what do you say to 2 Low?

Scarface: As far as 2 Low concerned, it's about what 2 Low wants. You can tell the man go to school and learn what these muthafuckas want you to learn *but* you gotta go out for yourself and see for your goddamn self.

Eiht: Don't bank your life off what happens with another muthafucka. For me, it didn't work. Tht don't mean that it don't work for you. Because *I* chose, *I* chose not to go to school. That's me, it don't apply to everybody.

Ray: Everybody's they own individual. That's what makes you a man! To make your own decisions and not to be no follower.

Eiht: Muthafuckas come up to me and say, "Well kids look up to you. You're their role model." I don't like that shit. I don't want to be looked at within the frame of being the perfect nigga, because I'm not. I don't tell the kids I'm your perfect role model, stay in school, don't do drugs. It's a muthafuckin' lie. I smoke chronic everyday, I drink when I want to. My position here is to give people an outlook at what might happen if you choose that shit. That's what every rap I got is about. Muthafucka, if you gonna pick up a strap and smoke a muthafucka, okay cool. Your decision. Ya ass doin' twenty to life, if you get caught.

Rob: Who influenced you when you were thirteen? Did N.W.A influence you?

Spice: I took that shit for what it was worth. I took the knowledge. I didn't go smoke a muthafucka. I carried a strap 'cause everybody in my hood was gettin' smoked. I just had a shootout four days ago! I'm still livin' in this shit. Now that I got a little cash on and shit, I still gotta worry about niggas bein' jealous, tryin to smoke me. Niggas shootin' at me. Why? Why niggas shootin' at me?

Havoc: I got hauled twice in the same month. I was ballin' man, you know. Niggas be wantin' to get nigga.

Ray: Everybody in my crew got shot.

Scarface: See we'll stop talkin' about this shit when they start givin' us better shit to talk about.

Eiht: 'Cause there ain't no party here, bitch! *[scattered laughter]* What the fuck we celebratin'? *[More laughter]* We don't have no good times over here. . .

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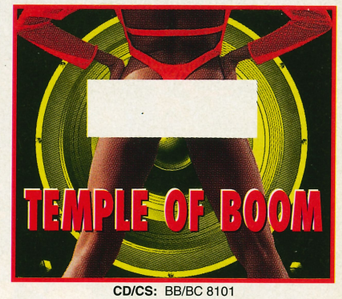

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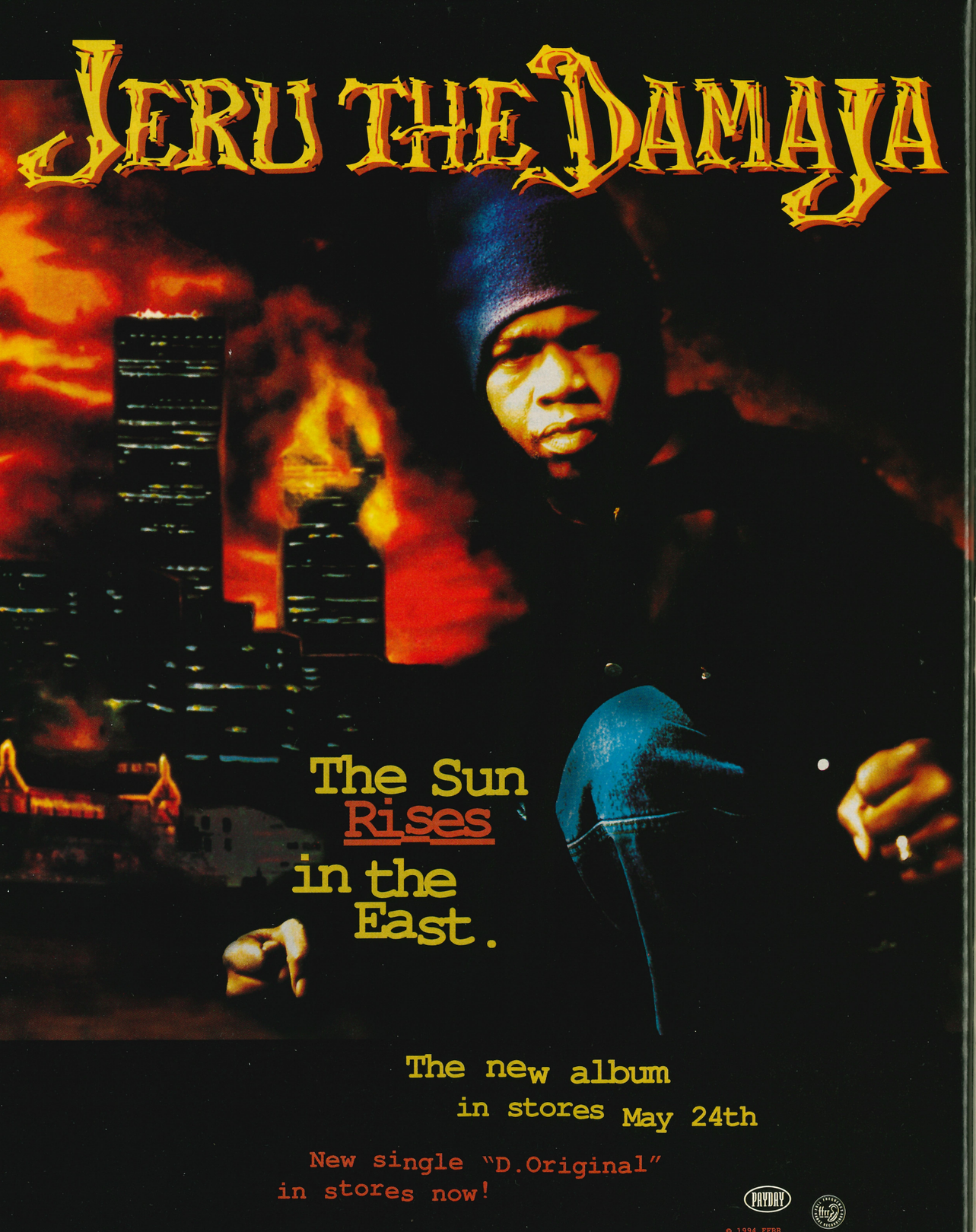


ALBUMS

HEAVY D & THE BOYZ

Nuttin' But Love
Uptown
Production: Marley Marl, Pete Rock, Teddy Riley, Track Masterz, Kid Capri, Erick Sermon, Troy Williams

Remember those halcyon days of youth? When the primary goal of existence was to max and relax, and music granted you the means to escape from reality? Well, Heavy D does. And on his fifth album he offers a brief respite from all of the trigga happy niggas and born losers who are currently terrorizing the crossover charts.

Like all of his previous albums, *Nuttin' But Love* sheds light on a side of the Black experience that most people have forgotten about—the one that deals with love and life and relationships. And it is to Heavy's credit that he still has the guts to make music that is safe for children to listen to, diverse enough for older adults to enjoy and authentic enough for the hoods to ride to.

As we have come to expect, a host of all-star collaborators have come together to take care of the musical details. Long time collaborators Marly Marl, Teddy Riley and Pete Rock join up with the likes of the Track Masterz, Kid Capri, Erick Sermon and Troy Williams to ensure that Heavy's beats are strong enough to support his heavyweight rhymes. Instead of changing styles to accommodate producers, Hev forces them to meet him on his terms, thus correcting the main criticism of last year's *Blue Funk* album, where many felt that Heavy caught a dose of the ruffneck flu and came on a little bit too strong. This time all the people involved make "Heavy D"-type records. Pete Rock does not use a single horn loop, Teddy Riley refrains from new jacking, Erick Sermon keeps his muddy basslines and Zapp records at home, and Marley Marl does not come within 100 yards of "Funky Drummer."

While the entire album oozes with quality and class, the songs that really stand out are "Sex Wit You," Pete Rock's ultimate summer jam (he recycles the breezy groove last heard on De La's "Ring, Ring, Ring"). The Kid Capri-produced title track that combines a superbly chopped synthesizer groove with an old school "Vikki D"-type chorus. Teddy Riley's mix of George Benson and Kool & The Gang on "This Is Your Night" and the Track Masterz' reflective "Move On," which employs the notorious "If There's A Cure For This" bassline under Heavy's insightful lyrics concerning urban decay and dreams deferred.

Rounding things out are the often slept on vocals of Heavy D. Whether he's boasting in a hardrock fashion on "Keep It Goin'" ("I make noise like a car alarm/I got star charm, with beats that do a body harm"), praising Black women ("The backbone of the Black home") on "Black Coffee" or letting you know that he sees "nothin' but silver linings in black clouds" on the optimistic "Take Your Time," he continues to grip the steel with authority.

While the overall package is tight and covers all of the bases nicely, Heavy still seems to be taking a chance. After all, we live in a world where teenagers are selling millions of albums by acting the fool. And in such an environment it is a brave man who makes music that appeals to our virtues instead of pandering to our vices.

REGINALD C. DENNIS

CHI MODU

BEATNUTS

The Beatnuts
Violator/Relativity
Production: artist

After their initial puff and swig of the world famous Beatnuts on their acclaimed *Intoxicated Demons* EP, peeps have been waiting for this album to drop for about as long as

5 a hip-hop classic 4 slammin'—definite satisfaction 3 good, worth checking out 2 needs help 1 totally wack

Psycho Les, JuJu and Fashion have been waiting to collect their props in light of their much underrated production work for the likes of Chi Ali, Cypress and Naughty.

In the spirit of the true school of hip-hop, this album satisfies with insanity, loads of laughs and an originality that sparkles like a set of gold fronts. The Beatnuts bring a sense of fun, mischief and anarchy back to the art form, but despite the hedonistic haze in which they apparently live their lives ("I wanna fuck, drink beer and smoke some shit"), these ghetto-styled frat boys have obviously put a lot of thought, care and creativity into their album. From the many funky segues, bits of Spanish and pause-button style collages that bridge the tracks, to the scratching solo on "Superbad" or the snap, crackle and pop of the vinyl sampled on "Fried Chicken," these niggas have done work. Combining boom-bashing New York beats, with cool jazz loops, a dirty dose of the funk and plenty of subliminal sounds (like the sample of a little boy talking on "Hit Me With That"), these tracks reach new elevations through sheer innovation. Through various twists and turns, you won't know what to expect next, and some of the lyrics ("I possess more chicks than PMS") will no doubt catch you out there. Honesty and not political correctness is what these guys are about. After all, who else could make a crass ode to oral sex ("Lick The Pussy") sound so damn fly?

S.H. FERNANDO JR.

ANOTHA LEVEL

On Anotha Level

Priority

Production: Stix & Stones

If you need a break from G-funk addicted, bitch-slappers and want to throw on a record that you can nod your head and laugh at a punch line or two, check out Anotha Level, a new five-man crew from the chill side of LA. All they do is freestyle with Old School flair over butter-smooth tracks that could spark a mellow cipher anywhere. And even though Ice Cube is the executive producer of their debut, crew members Ced Twice, Stenge and Bambino rhyme about playing SuperNintendo, sporting Nautica and Polo gear, and tagging honey after honey. The album captures a slice of hip-hop that doesn't sweat, cock or glare. It chills. Their rhymes are not complex, but they make up for it with laid back, distinctive deliveries and made-to-flow beats.

Setting it off lovely with "Let Me Take Ya," they embark on a mission of bugging, dropping funny rhymes one after another. "Just Feelin'" spreads butter with its recognizable funk groove and "Don't Stimulate" is a track where they warn honeys not to play themselves. What's remarkable about this song is that even though they take turns dismissing girls who start something they can't finish, they do it without menace. Now, *that's* a new level. While the first single, "What's That Cha Say," proves that they are swinging from the West, the pimp-strollin' "Caught Ya Swingin'" can crank necks on any coast. Ice Cube joins the party and let's one off on "Level-N-Service" and if that wasn't enough, The Pharcyde do justice on a messy track called "Phat-T." And after listening to their nasal, sing-song flows, you might conclude that Bambino and Imani might have been separated at birth.

On Anotha Level is something of a throwback to when heads weren't embarrassed to just have some fun. That's all Anotha Level knows how to do, and they do it so well, that they even got the "Nigga You Love To Hate" to crack a smile.

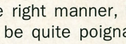
DIMITRY LEGER

SOUTH CENTRAL CARTEL

'N Gatz We Truss

RAL/DJ West

Production: artist



So you thought all of the recent controversies surrounding gangsta rap would cause it to shrivel up and die, didn't you? Wrong again, Ioc. Brace yo' self, fool, because the South Central Cartel is straight jackin' niggas in the nine-fo'.

Here we go again, another group telling us of the ubiquitous strife and adversity of South Central Los Angeles. As the album's title suggests, this record contains a plethora of narratives that revolve around firearms and gang activity. But of course, the S.C.C. doesn't glorify those actions, they're just simply reporting on the realities of ghetto life.

The Cartel, which consists of Havoc Da Mouthpiece, Prodeje and Havikk Da Rymesan, are experts when it comes to dishing out the reel to reel stories of murder, madness and mayhem that we have all heard a billion times before. For example, songs like "Gang Story," "Stay Out Of The Hood" and "Rolling Down The Block," all contain the usual gangsta themes: set tripping, cruising down Crenshaw and hoochies. Musically, the album is a tight blend of what is becoming the standard for gangsta albums: live musicians who replay old George Clinton snippets and funk breakbeats. On this level the S.C.C. guarantees that you have something good to ride to, but on the conceptual lyrical ends they fail to flip any styles that would allow them to really standout among their peers.

And that's the general vibe of the whole album, it's not wack but there is little that will set it apart from anything else out right now. This is generic gangsta rap that does not seek to venture into new territory. Not to say that it doesn't have a place—brothers shooting other brothers in drive-by shootings is real, and when examined in the right manner, these tales of expression can be quite poignant—but when you forget that the success of any good gangsta album lies in provocative lyrics and well-constructed, original beats, then it becomes the same ol' same ol'.

While the good people of California, Texas, Arizona, Louisiana and Michigan (who make up the majority of the S.C.C.'s 300,000 plus fan base) will definitely scoop this joint up and not be disappointed, those of us who need something more in terms of originality will probably make like Soul II Soul and keep on moving.

THE DERELICT TODD B.

GHETTO MAFIA

Draw The Line

Funktown

Production: MC Breed, DJ Swift, Carl Dorsey

Atlanta, a city known for producing pop artists such as TLC and Kris Kross, is now becoming a home for hardcore. And the Ghetto Mafia comes straight out of "A-Town" with a healthy dose of 808 and a dash of G-funk.

The Mafia consists of rappers Nino and Wicked. Nino has a flow reminiscent of Spice 1 while Wicked sounds like an educated Willie D; a startling combination to say the least, but when they get together they create a style of their own. The lead-off single, "Everyday Thang In The Hood," which has guest vocals by MC Breed, is an excellent example of what they are capable of. With its drawn-out bass and slow funk flow, it is the perfect means of testing your system on sunny spring days. And when it's time to get ill, there are songs like "Mr. President," where the two flip rhymes about breaking into the White House and coldly assassinating the First Family. While it may not be popular among Secret Service agents, it will please the millions of supporters of the G-funk flow.

Production-wise, the album is as tight as their game. Breed, DJ Swift and Carl Dorsey succeed in achieving the near impossible—freaking the G-funk style without making beats that sound like they were rejects from *The Chronic* and *Doggystyle*.

THE DERELICT TODD B.

JT THE BIGGA FIGGA

Playaz N the Game

Get Low Records

Production: artist

As Bay Area cities like Oakland, Vallejo and Hayward continue casting light across the hip-hop landscape, San Francisco goes on languishing in the shadows, though not for lack of talent. Along with groups like RBL Posse and I.M.P, JT The Bigga Figga has long been blowing up the backstreets of San Francisco with his very own style of G-funk: homespun choruses like, "Game recognize game in tha Bay mane;" a distinctive accent that's part countrified drawl, part Tony Montana slur; and basic, live sounding drum layers, rather than the bottom-heavy vibrations so dominant in the East Bay.

For his second self-produced album, JT injects a deep dose of player personality while freaking some unusual sound effects. Occasionally the results fall short —"You Can't Play a Playa" suffers from an obnoxious keyboard squeak, and "Mr. Millimeter" is too Spice-like for its own good—but most times JT comes original. As if woven together on some old basement loom, the funk patterns seem simple one minute, intricate the next. "Peep Game" (featuring D-Moe), with its fluid groove, quacking scratches and glassy chain rattling, evolves into a fat slab of Rhythm & Bluesy hip-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 80

South Central Cartel.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 78

hop noise. And "Doin' Dirt," a low-down G-ride through JT's past, is turned classic by the chorus, in which scattered gunshots are deftly juxtaposed with a poppish vocal snippet.

As you might have guessed from the album's title, the lyrics deal in the obvious: game, game and more game. Which might wear a little thin if it weren't for JT's ability to coax a mood (as opposed to a message) from a track. This is perhaps best realized in "The Whole Thang," where horn furls and high-end squirts (from some old toy synthesizer?) are blown over a Stanley Clarke-ish bed of sound. Here JT flows fast and slow, from hood-side reflections to MC boasts, demonstrating not only that it's possible to be deep in the game and have skills at the same time, but that Frisco is about much more than Rice A Roni and the Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy. Now, if only folks would stop frontin'.

B. DOBSON

RAW FUSION

Hoochiefied Funk

Hollywood Basic

Production: artist

Ever wonder why Art Garfunkel is a lot less famous than his former partner Paul Simon? Why Maceo, Fred Wesley and Bobby Byrd can't sell any records without the Godfather of Soul? Or—to use a hip-hop example—why a Greg Nice, Fredro Star or Charlie Brown solo album, despite dope production, could never sustain more than one hit single? The answer, niggas and niggettes, is chemistry. That mystery ingredient that often has nothing to do with actual talent. When matched with the proper counterparts and motives, all of the aforementioned personalities provide their crews with a unique spark of "whatchamacallit" that propels the collective to the top of their game. But when apart from their teammates they're like bullets without a gun: potentially explosive but, for the most part, harmless.

Raw Fusion is a great concept that, for lack of chemistry, doesn't always work. Money B and DJ Fuze make up important elements of Digital Underground, arguably one of the most progressive cliques in hip-hop. Fuze brings the deep-in-the-crate samples and Money adds the offbeat rhyme skills that perfectly complement Shock G's prodigious lyrical, vocal and musical talents. Outside the clique, however, Fuze and Money bring together records that, despite their imaginative samples and intricate, agile rhyming, lack noteworthy radiance. *Hoochiefied Funk*, the duo's second album in three years, is a concerted effort to dispel this notion, but one that succeeds only half the time.

Not that Money B doesn't sometimes have me checking myself. His personality is infectious, and on certain songs, he sustains the li'l mackdaddy persona he created for himself on "I Get Around" quite well. "Freaky Note," with its smoove rub-a-dub styling, Shock G's croonin', and the cleanest down and dirty sex rap that only someone with Money's clever tongue-in-cheek stylings could deliver, grows on you immediately. Like Nate Dogg's verse on "Ain't No Fun," he uses an R&B format to state, quite explicitly, the true motivation behind R. Kelly, K-Ci and Christopher Williams's slick allusions. The rest of side-A slips away with the exception of the kinky "Red Riding Good" and the solid "Bumpin' Em," where Money abandons his cutesy mack mode for a harder rhyme style and Fuze serves up a nice dose of East Bay Funk.

Side-B isn't without its faults, but real hip-hop fans should skip right to it. "Action Packed" and "Word For The Day," the LP's best songs, are the moments you've waited much too long for. It is here that the true spirit of the Styleetron is resurrected, the juxtaposition of hard thump, reggae toasting, jazz licks and agile mic checking smashed, scrambled and spliced. "Do Your Homework" and "Dirty Drawls" prove that everything gets evened out once Shock and the rest of the DU crew jump on board, saving the day once again.

While the album showcases Raw Fusion's considerable talent, the sophomore jinx is in full effect. To witness the duo's full potential, check Digital Underground's *The Body-Hat Syndrome*. Otherwise, here's hoping the third time will be the real charm. At least Bootsy's Rubber Band and The Brides Of Funkenstein will have some company.

CHEO H. COKER

FREDDIE FOXXX

Crazy Like A Foxxx

Flavor Unit/Epic

Production: artist, SID, Buckwild, Edman

I don't remember all of my grade school biology lessons, but the Foxxx family must be related to the cat family because this brother's career has had nine lives. After kicking around for years out on Strong Island, Foxxx has been through both the independent game and the major label game. Remember his 1989 Eric B.-produced LP *Freddie Foxxx Is Here*? Me neither. But a couple of spirited performances with KRS-One and Naughty by Nature quickly put him back on the map and landed him a new deal with Queen Latifah's outfit.

On the new joint, you can almost feel Freddie straining to cover all of his bases. He tempers his rough, thundering voice and stripped down, bass-heavy tracks with chanted choruses—*Shottie in the back, sun roof top, rolling in the scene with my gangsta lean* or *Can't break away from the ghetto*—injecting some pop hooks into his hardcore style. In the album's intro, Freddie starts things off on the teaching tip by announcing that there is a "hidden message in every song," but there are also enough bodies littered across the lyric sheet to satisfy the most blood thirsty hip-hop head. He has a Mac 10 for all wack rappers, somebody is offered 5 G's to off Freddie (but fucks around and misses) and some wannabe is shot in the face six times. That's not to say that the messages aren't there: fake gangsters get their due, as do greedy preachers ("Who got their hand in your pocket taking money by the knot?") and anyone who set foot on the Mayflower. "Project Mice" is a primer on how, uh, "outside forces" keep brothers separated from each other with the crack trade.

Freddie pulls it off, bringing these seemingly contradictory elements together without looking like a punk who's trying to please everyone. His skills are all intact. He sounds confident and forceful at any speed, except on the pimped-out, G-funk-ish "Shottie In The Back," where his energy seems to waiver over the slower grooves. As much as they thump, the tracks don't really distinguish themselves from each other and I wish he wouldn't shout his lyrics so much; it makes him sound too eager. But to his credit, Freddie can hold your attention all the way from hitting the skinz ("Meet Some Skinz") to a sincere thanks to God ("Amen").

MARION DAYE

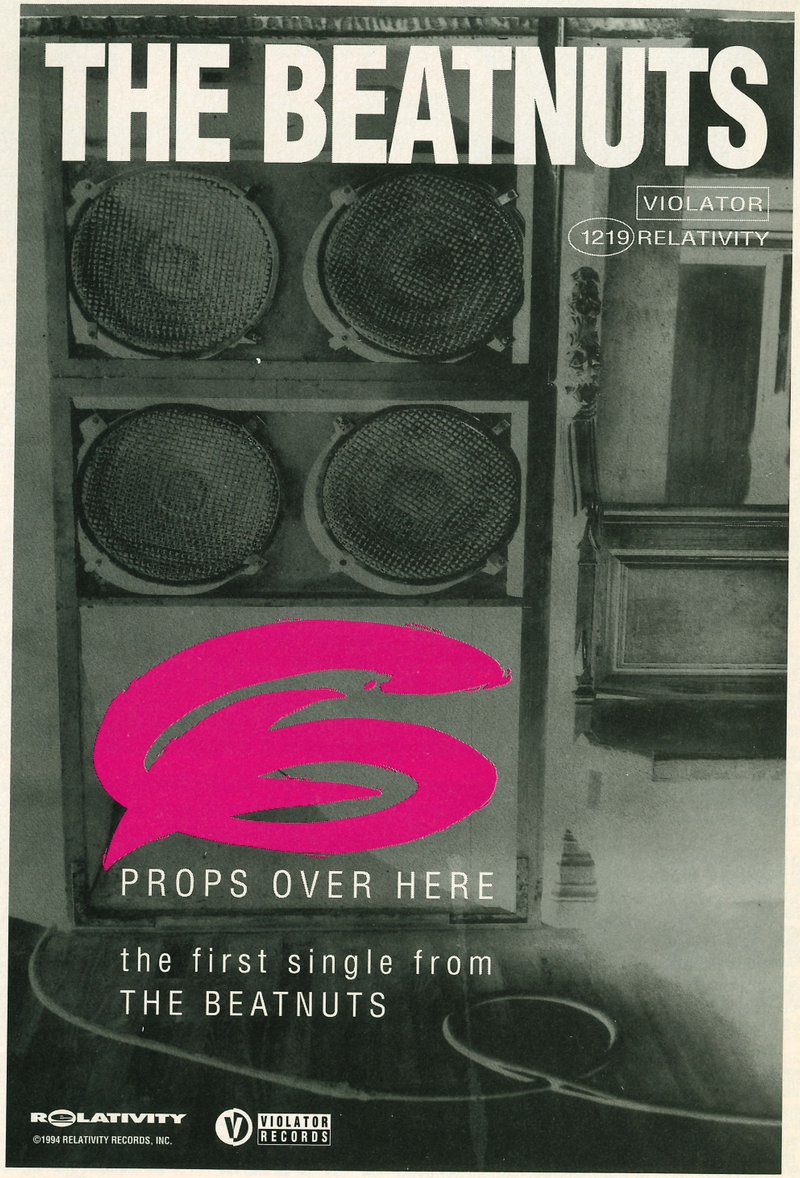
KOOL G RAP & DJ POLO

Killer Kuts

Cold Chillin'

Production: artist, Marley Marl, Eric B, Large Professor, Anton, TrakMasterz, Sir Jinx

Back in '88, when Kool G Rap rhymed over the mechanical James Brown grunts of "It's A Demo," he wasn't really on the "gangsta" tip. But no question, the man was lyrical beyond belief. This first single was mainly about rocking the party, yet G Rap's articulate lisp and precise rhymes made this an instant classic. For legions of hardcore fans, this was just a



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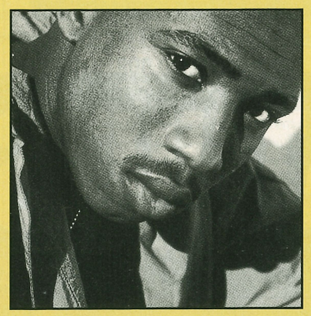

Long before the ranking sounds of "Gangster's Anthem," "Action" and "Number 2" hit the airwaves, the word was out that Terror Fabulous was one of the fastest rising stars in JA's dancehall circuit. With major label attention finally giving him the spotlight, he continues to keep it real and close to his roots with solid skills and no frills. The album's production favors straight-ahead drum and bass bubblers (without all the science), which gives Terror's smooth, half-sung toasts center stage.

Songs run the gamut from "Miss Goody Goody"—an "Oh Carolina" ska-style romp in '90s fashion—to the title track, which adds a subtle hip-hop beat in order to thicken the flow. There are also plenty of deejay/singer combos that showcase the voices of Nadine Sutherland ("Action"), Maxi Priest ("Miss Goody Goody") and Gary Minott ("Yagga Yagga"), but thankfully none of the feeble crossover attempts that usually sink a lot of US released dancehall LP's.

S.H. FERNANDO JR.

US3
Hand On The Torch
Blue Note/Capitol Records

With their debut already gold, this British group proves that there is indeed a sizable market for their take on the jazz rap fusion. Capitol Records can give themselves props for making the crew a part of the family, instead of suing them for lifting samples off of their prestigious Blue Note catalog. The Us3 formula creates rhythmic relaxation by looping entire cuts from such legendary jazz performers as Horace Silver and Art Blakey, combining them with three rappers and six improvisational jazz performers.

The single, "Cantaloop (Flip Fantasia)," gets its funky flow from Herbie Hancock's temperamental piano on "Cantaloupe Island." Brooklyn rappers Rahsaan and Kobie Powell kick some around the way flavor by busting rhymes about everyday ghetto life on tracks like "Just Another Brother." Also joining them on the mic is Tukka Yoot, a Jamaican-born rapper who makes those booties shake on his "Tukka Yoot's Riddim." Combining authentic lyrics with new instrumentals linked to serious jazz riffs, Us3 indulges those who seek original flavors.

SILVANA

GIL SCOTT-HERON
Spirits
TVT

With a renewed interest in poetry and the spoken words sparked by rap, it is only fitting that one of rap's greatest predecessors return to stake his claim to this familiar domain. On *Spirits*, his first full-length offering since 1982, Gil Scott-Heron shows that conscious and clever wordplay over smoothed-out jazzy grooves is still as much his art as it is for any young rapper on the mic today. In fact, on the opening cut, "Message To The Messengers," he acknowledges this generation of new beats, saying, "We got respect for young rappers and the way they're free-wayin'/But if you're gonna be teaching folks things, be sure you know what you're sayin'." Gil speaks with a rumbling voice of wisdom and experience that commands attention, making his stinging political commentary as powerful as his singing on ballads like "Lady's Song." He also offers plaintive personal confessions on "The Other Side, Parts 1, 2 & 3," that cut right to the gut.

Backed by the 13-piece Amnesia Express (which includes long time collaborator Brian Jackson), whom he still tours with, the tracks have that same vintage feel as the cream of Gil's prolific '70s catalog. Quest producer Ali Shaheed Muhammed does an excellent job blending in with this almost retro style on his musical contribution, the upbeat "Don't Give Up." Coltrane, meanwhile, infuses the title-track with his "Spirits."

S.H. FERNANDO JR.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 66

prelude to the intense artistic vision that G Rap and Polo would capture time and time again as their career progressed.

Killer Kuts brings together the best and most popular songs from G Rap & Polo's three albums. It's a much needed compilation, since G Rap and Polo are one of those groups whose albums generally contain a few moments of brilliance surrounded by solid, but not exceptional material. Now the best of the batch is all here, in one pistol-packed collection of back-to-back classics.

From the goin'-for-yours anthem "Road To The Riches" and the rugged love-sick ode "Truly Yours," to the uptempo-but-still-hardcore "Men At Work" and the relentless "Wanted: Dead Or Alive," G Rap and Polo represent the East Coast player lifestyle like no other New York crew. Having the opportunity to work with legendary producer Marley Marl and hotshots like Large Professor and Sir Jinx certainly helped cement the group's sound. But G Rap has a gift for ill imagery and detailed fantasy that separates him from the pack of "hardcore" MCs. "Streets Of New York" has to stand as the most moving, lucid portrait of inner-city angst ever recorded. The sax blows emotion while G Rap plays omniscient narrator, capturing snapshots of life around him: a drunk "whose whole life remains inside a bottle of Night Train"; a "poor little sister" whose daughter Sonya "has pneumonia"; "human beings laying on the pavement"; drug dealers who "drive around lookin' hard/knowin' they're sendin' their brothers and sisters to the graveyard." Now *that's* reality.

Of course, G Rap isn't always deep—the pure raunch of "Talk Like Sex" and "Operation CB" become head-nodding hilarity over slamming tracks. And *Godfather* fans will love the crime-based narrative of the recent single "On The Run" (yes—the remix). The only drawback to this album is the inclusion of so-so cuts "Death Wish," "Letters" and "Jive Talk"—but that's more or less personal nit-picking. This collection is a must-own for any fan of real hip-hop.

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sure shot singles

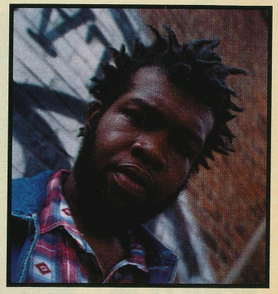
Smif-N-Wessun

"Bucktown" b/w "Lit's Git It On"
Wreck Records
Production: Da Beatminerz

The moment the track starts with its laid-back, lighthearted trumpet hook, you'll be instantly pulled into the nod-noddin' beat. But if you're one of the many to assume that this is the latest single from Black Moon, you'll be mistaken, but understandably so. "Bucktown" is the debut single from Black Moon's peoples, Smif-N-Wessun, who you might remember from their appearance on *Enta Da Stage*. While the two groups do share a similar sing-song delivery and the same producers, you can't take anything away from the strength of this single, or its ruff-edged b-side. "Bucktown" masters the essence of the cool-out vibe by contrasting one of the most mesmerizing melodic loops of late, with Steele and Tek's wicked lyrics of nonchalant threats. The whole cut massages the mental with an unfadeable attitude that is a refreshing break from the forced dramatics found on most hardcore hip-hop today.

While the term "Bucktown" refers to Brooklyn, NY (where both Black Moon and Smif-N-Wessun reside), the song is really an anthem for all live steppers in ghettos from state to state, as Steele explains: "Bucktown's everywhere I swear/It's clear to me/You feel the weed/Now I really see/Night falls around the way/Original heads come out to play/Puff herb, break day/It's just a regular/Everyday state of being I/Mind holds the weight, rhymes free the mind in time/I find reality follows me where I roam/360 degrees back home in/Bucktown!/Home of the original gun clappers!" You can't help but to relate to that realism.

Jeru The Damaja



"D. Original"
Payday/London/PLG
Production: DJ Premier

As far as real heads are concerned, 1994 is shaping up to be the year of the Damaja. Slowly and skillfully this brother has built a rep that you just can't front on. And with his debut LP about ready to drop any day now, you can rest assured that the best is yet to come.

"D. Original" is the type of record that people have in their minds when they talk about "taking it to the next level." From the kick drum intro to the panic-stricken background tones to the unorthodox piano line that literally sounds like someone sat on the keys by accident, this record stands apart from anything available on the market today. With Jeru, hardcore meets and successfully subjugates the avant-garde. DJ Premier proves once again that this controlled chaos is his domain, and after just one listen to his latest sonic assault you'll feel like breaking somebody's jaw.

Jeru's fraud-free-flow continues to knock lightweights off the mic at will. He may not freestyle, but he is on a mission of hardcore just the same: "Not stressin' 5-0/Hot hand in Celo/Live in the land of crooks/Yes, Brooklyn's the borough/Homicide central/East New York/Where the manic depressive, psycho murderers stalk/Walk like a ninja on the asphalt/Talk is cheap you're outlined in chalk."

Make no mistake, Jeru is the true "dirty rotten scoundrel" and unlike those other pretenders, he makes records for the homies who are here now.

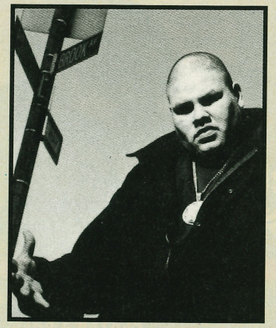
The Crooklyn Dodgers

"Crooklyn"
Forty Acres and a Mule Musicworks/MCA
Production: Q-Tip

Masta Ace and Buckshot on a Q-Tip track!? That's reason enough to get up on this single. Add that to the long-awaited return of "the magnificent" Special Ed, and you know the shit must be monumental. And "Crooklyn" won't let you down. The Abstract's beat is all bassline hypnosis and layers of loops. As the groove creates the aura, all three lyricists take their task to heart as they reflect on that " '70s thing from the days when kids didn't act so craze/In Crooklyn."

As the first single off the soundtrack of Spike Lee's newest movie, the song has nothing to do with the film and the film has nothing to do with crooks (it's about family life in Brooklyn), but whatever's clever. It's just good hearing Special Ed's voice again when he kicks lines like: "Panic/As another manic depressant/Adolescent/Stares at death/Now what's left/When there ain't no God and a whole lotta pride?/It might be a homicide/So let the drama/Slide/We don't want no problems, B/Get your name in the obituary columns, see/Cuz life is too short/And it just gets shorter/I wish I had a quarter for all my people they slaughter/Last year alone/In the dead zone/Walk straight, but don't walk late/Cuz I'm comin' with a hate only made/From what it made me/Cuz nobody ever played me/Now it's only gettin' worse/Buckshot and Ace in the land of the waste/Kickin' you in your face!"

The only drawback to this single is that after hearing it, you'll be open for a whole album from this high-powered collaboration. Encore!



FAT JOE DA GANGSTA

"Da Real"
Relativity/Violator
Production: The Beatnuts, DJ Premier, DJ Slip

Continuing his mission to flow from the heart, Fat Joe represents with a new single speaking on "the real" of his rough-and-tumble upbringing. In an age where gangsta rap is being challenged as destructive and gratuitous, Joe convincingly captures the stifling frustration of poverty that leads some kids to commit crimes in order to survive.

The single features the original Beatnuts mix from the album, along with two fat-ass remixes by DJ Premier and DJ Slip. The 'Nuts blend a rolling beat with sparse horns and bass notes, while Premier continues in the vein of his work with Nas on "Memory Lane" and lays down moody keys above a thumping track. DJ Slip gives the track a funky West Coast flair with a solid beat and just a touch of that G Funk-style high-end harmony. The result is three distinct styles of hardcore rap—at least one of which is sure to keep even the most discerning head nodding as Joe spins his tale. "That was the way it was/One day I went to visit my aunt and stuck up my cuz," Joe declares in a tone that makes you believe it. Robbing sheepskin coats on the streets of the South Bronx was the prelude to "makin mad loot" and earning respect. As someone who has lived it, Joe is "sick and tired of these fake ass niggaz/sayin' that they catchin' bodies when they never pulled a trigga." Hip-hop would certainly benefit if the so-called "reality rap" was left to the experts. In the Bronx, shit is real, but now Joe's rollin' with "a bunch-a crazy Puerto Ricans, so ay yo don't sleep!"

coast 2 coast

1 Q-TIP (R) CHILLIN' WITH THE LEGION AND LORD FINESSE (PEERING OVER THE SHOULDER) 2 GRANDMASTER DEE OF WHODINI CATCHIN' UP WITH ONE LOVE RECORDS CEO, DRES OF BLACK SHEEP 3 KC AND MARY: "THIS IS HOW THE TWO COMBINE" AT A DEATH ROW PARTY IN L.A. 4 KID CAPRI IN THE BIG LEAGUES WITH QUINCY JONES AND JACK THE RAPPER AT A BOBBY BROWN PARTY 5 ROSIE PEREZ AND MADONNA HANGIN' TIGHT 6 SOUNDBOY KILLER MEGA BANTON REPRESENTIN' FOR THE KNICKS, HOME OF JAMAICA'S NUMBER ONE NBA SUPERSTAR, PAT EWING 7 TONI, TONI, TONI! 8 A FEW OF HIP-HOP'S BALLERS, INCLUDING DIGABLE PLANETS, AT A DOCTOR DRE, ED LOVER & T-MONEY CELEBRITY GAME IN NEW YORK 9 KURTIS BLOW HAS RETURNED TO THE STAGE THIS YEAR IN A SERIES OF OLD SCHOOL REUNION SHOWS 10 TLC'S LEFT EYE WITH HER BIG BABY, ANDRE RISON OF THE ATLANTA FALCONS 11 PRINCE RAKEEM AND SHYHEIM MAINTAINING THE UNITY BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS OF THE WU-TANG CLIQUE 12 LEE QUINONES CHECKS THE KRYLON SUPPLY AT THE SPRAY CAN SYMPOSIUM IN ARIZONA

1

2

KOI SOJER

KOI SOJER

3

J- LASH

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TIM WILLIS

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J- LASH

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RONNIE WRIGHT

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RONNIE WRIGHT

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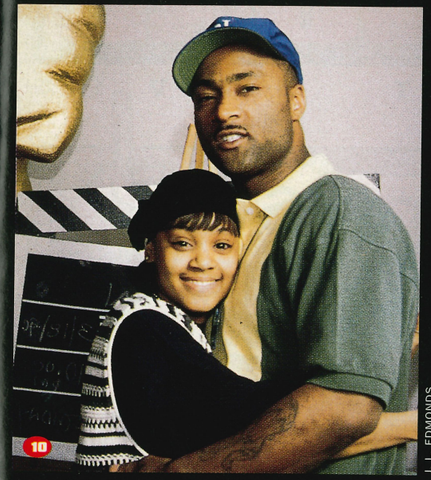
DELPHINE FAWUNDU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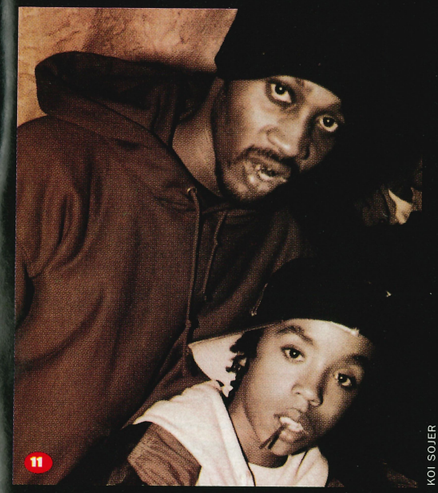

11

KOI SOJER

12

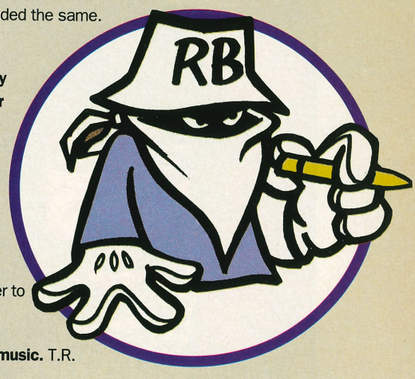
MARTHA COOPER

THE RAP BANDIT

EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT HIP-HOP BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK. . .

Q: What language is Busta Rhymes speaking? K.S. *Chicago, IL*

A: He raps in a distinctive form of English, which is how it should be. I mean, life would suck if everyone sounded the same. Just look at the R&B charts.



Q: Dr. Dre is a bad-ass producer with crazy funky beats, but don't you think DJ Premier of GangStarr can take the man out? D.A. *Flushing, NY*

A: You can't pick a winner, they're both incredible. And while Dre has sold more, Premier and GangStarr are finally getting some well-earned commercial success too. Looking back, I guess the time Guru took off to work on his little jazz project was a good idea. I just hope he's finally realized it's better to work with DJ Premier than Kenny G.

Q: Who was or is the oldest rapper in rap music. T.R. *Bronx, NY*

A: There are several rappers tied for being the oldest. And while I could list them individually, it's much easier for me to "Just Say Stet."

Q: How come PRT (Poor Righteous Teachers) have never been on the cover of THE SOURCE? They have made huge contributions to the style and awareness of hip-hop listeners abroad. Please don't overlook Jersey, especially Trenton, any longer. B.S.J. *Trenton, NJ*

A: PRT is a quality group, so I'll be happy to answer your questions honestly (subliminally) my friend. While PRT has had many (one) hit songs, an appearance on THE SOURCE cover is reserved (cheap rates) for well-established stars only (TLC). But fear not because rap (guns) is a beautiful music, and the Poor Righteous Teachers have a good chance (lotto) of being on a future cover. As far as New Jersey is concerned, I visit Trenton (Atlantic City) often and by no means do I overlook (annoying train stop) your fine city.

Q: Do I really get soap if I send Jeru the Damaja money? O.M.C. *Los Angeles, CA*

A: Yes, that deal has been certified with the Better Business Bureau due to last year's mess involving Jive Records and the makers of Tide. To this day, literally thousands of rap fans are still waiting for their box of all-purpose Mr. Lee Detergent.

Q: Is Tupac prejudiced against white people? I really hope not. M.S. *Spotswood, NJ*

A: Don't worry, Tupac isn't prejudiced. He'll kick anyone's ass.

Q: Straight to the point: Shaquille O'Neal can't rap and he's wack as shit. He only has a name. Agree or Disagree? B.T.K. *Baltimore, MD*

A: Disagree. Shaq seems to get dissed from all sides. He gets criticized by the so-called experts in basketball for devoting energy to rap that could be used for working in his game, i.e. learning how to shoot foul shots. But I have to give Shaq his props. He's great at ball, a good rapper and even a budding actor. The only thing Shaq hasn't done yet is write a hip-hop answer column, but this isn't the place to give *Vibe* their first good idea.

Q: I was reading THE SOURCE 1991 "Hip-Hop Year In Review" issue and I saw some sex packets on the back cover. Are sex packets real? A.C. *Richmond, VA*

A: Sex packets were a Digital Underground promotional item that promised a sensual experience in a plastic bag. If you think this is real, your genitals probably have the words UNTOUCHED BY HUMAN HANDS on them.

Q: Who's that guy rappin' at the end of "The Mystery of Chess Boxing" video? Is it The Genius or Prince Rakeem, or is it you? O.B. *Brooklyn, NY*

A: It's isn't me, I haven't been in a video since "Hip-Hop Hooray." But I understand your confusion. That's why I'm trying to get THE SOURCE to put out a separate Wu-Tang magazine devoted solely to keeping track of their solo careers.

ILLUSTRATION BY TODD JAMES

GOT A BURNING QUESTION ABOUT HIP-HOP? SEND IT TO:

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THE LAST WORD

BY ANDRE LEROY DAVIS

COMIN' AT YA IN JULY

EAZY E:

It's a gross understatement to say that the last couple of years have been interesting for Eazy E. He watched his group—the most popular rap crew in the land—splinter, with all of his ex-homies pointing their fingers at him. Even though his two post-N.W.A EPs are platinum, he still hasn't delivered the full-length solo album he's been promising for over two years. Although he was lampooned viciously on *The Chronic*, his pre-existing contracts with Dre put him in the strange position of watching his bank account grow as his public image diminished. Next month, we'll take you to Compton so you can see for yourself how he plans to get back in the saddle again.

CRACK'S TENTH SUMMER:

Nothing has had a larger impact on the hip-hop generation than the epidemic of rock cocaine. Quite simply, it was the oil that helped fuel hip-hop's engine, creating a culture of fast money and irreparable social harm. Without the epidemic, Chuck D would not have been quite so angry and the war between the Crips and Bloods would not have been as bloody. Without the crack trade, no one would have been "paid in full"; the gold-beeper-Benz culture would never have come to life. Now, the first generation of crack babies is about to enter sixth grade and we can look back and assess the damage. THE SOURCE will commemorate crack's tenth summer with a special two-part report starting next month.

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